

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN READER RESPONSE ENTRIES
TO FEMALE MAIN CHARACTERS**

by

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Abstract

This research study was designed to explore the differences in responses given by fourth grade males and females to dominate female characters in literature. Rosenblatt's theory of reader stance was used in designing the research questions. These were: 1) Do efferent and aesthetic responses to literature with female main characters differ between males and females? and 2) Do personal levels of understanding of literature with female main characters differ between males and females? Subjects listened to three literature selections with female main characters and then responded in writing to a given prompt. Responses were then scored using two continuums. The first assessed how efferently or aesthetically subjects responded to the literature. The second continuum evaluated the personal level of understanding reached by the subjects. Statistically significant gender differences were not found with regards to either research question. Males and females both responded at nearly a primarily aesthetic stance. Over 70% of the total responses came from the most aesthetic end of the continuum. Both genders were able to reach a level of personal understanding indicative of subjects beginning to interpret the events of the story. A significant finding did result when examining efferent/aesthetic responses given by male and female subjects as a whole. It was found that subjects responded significantly higher to the literature selection, Anastasia Krupnik than to the literature selection, Addie Across the Prairie.

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Table of Contents

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract	i
Acknowledgment	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	5
Statement of the Purpose	5
Definition of Terms	6
Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature	7
Transactional Theory	8
Efferent and Aesthetic Stances	10
Stance taken with Female Characters	33
Combination of Reading Factors	40
Chapter 3 Methodology	52
Research Questions	52
Subjects	52
Materials for Research Study	52
Treatment Condition	53
Assessment	54
Procedures	56
Statistical Evaluation	59
Chapter 4 Results and Findings	60
Efferent and Aesthetic Stances	60
Personal Levels of Understanding	64
Chapter 5 Discussion	71
Efferent and Aesthetic Responses	71
Personal Levels of Understanding	74
Implications	76
Future Research	79
Limitations	80

	Postscript	80
References		82
Appendixes		88
	Appendix A	88
	Appendix B	92

Figures

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
Figure 1	Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum	55
Figure 2	Personal Levels of Understanding Continuum	57

Tables

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
Table 1	Percentages of Responses at Each Stance on the Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum	63
Table 2	Mean Efferent/Aesthetic Responses for Males and Females by Book	65
Table 3	Percentages of Responses at Each Personal Level of Understanding	67
Table 4	Mean Responses for Males and Females at Each Level of Personal Understanding	70

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an intricate process which consists of such things as prior knowledge, personal experiences, comprehension, and the decoding of words. One theory of reading that has been developed to explain the reading process is the transactional theory of reading, as stated by Louise Rosenblatt. "The transactional process of the reading theory underlines the essential importance of both elements, the reader and the text" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 18). In her theory, the primary emphasis is on an ongoing interaction between the text and the reader. This interaction takes into account the experiences and background the reader brings to a text. Reading is a two way process involving a given reader and a given text. It is this interaction between the two that accounts for how a text is read and comprehended.

The reader contributes to the reading of a text personal knowledge, culture, gender, social class, background experiences, and other circumstances that make each reader unique and unlike any other person. The other component, the text, is simply a road map or blank slate waiting for the reader to bring his or her personal experiences to the text so that it can be interpreted and understood.

The central element to Rosenblatt's transactional theory is the concept of reader stance. Rosenblatt believes there are two primary stances a reader can adopt during the reading of any text. These are the efferent and the aesthetic stances (Cox and Many, 1992a; Peck, 1981; Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1991, 1994; Wilson, 1981).

The efferent stance involves reading with a specific purpose in mind, and this is often to gain new information or knowledge (Peck, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1991, 1994; Wilson, 1981). The reader is not reading for mere enjoyment, but is reading to find and discover information to answer specified questions. The emphasis is on the knowledge and recall produced from reading. Reading a science text to learn the stages of metamorphosis is an example of efferent reading.

Aesthetic reading, on the other hand, means that a reader is centered on the lived through experience that evolves as the text is being read (Cox and Many, 1992a; Peck, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1991, 1994; Wilson, 1981). For example, a student reading Dear Mr. Henshaw, may be able to relate highly to the experiences and feelings of Leigh, the main character, who blames himself for his parents' divorce. The reader may be able to empathize and understand his thoughts, feelings, and

emotions. Rosenblatt contends that if a text is read aesthetically, it is an event that is created in time and indicates that a highly personal and individual understanding of the text was created for the reader.

It is important to note that these responses occur on a continuum, meaning that there are gradations between efferent and aesthetic reading. There are the most efferent and aesthetic stances at either end, with the middle of the continuum containing characteristics of stances that are efferent and aesthetic. Any reading of a text may contain elements that are efferent and aesthetic, depending where the reader focuses his or her attention. At one point in a text, the reader may be reading efferently, while at another point in the text, the reader may be reading aesthetically. There is a continual shifting of attention based on whether the reader is focusing on the more efferent or aesthetic elements at any given point in a text. However, the reader at some point, either consciously or unconsciously, chooses a predominate stance to assume in a reading event. This helps to ultimately determine the predominate stance the reader assumes towards a text.

Also, two readers may read the same text very differently. Reader A may be reading a text efferently, while reader B is reading the text aesthetically. Reader A may choose to focus of the efferent aspects of a text because of the purpose of the reading event or because the reader has made no personal connection to the text. For example, reader A may be reading with the intent to identify the settings and characters of the story. Reader B may be closely connected to the topic of the same text and has made a very personal connection to the text. Reader B's purpose for reading the text may be to see how his/her life parallels that of the main character.

Of all the components of transactional theory, the idea of stance proves to be one of the most widely known and research has begun to examine these two stances. This idea of efferent and aesthetic stances has been examined to determine, in general, which stance appears to be most widely assumed while reading (Cox and Many, 1992b; Golden and Handloff, 1993; Hickman, 1981; Lehman and Scharer, 1993; Many, 1991; Nissel, 1987). Researchers have reached primarily the same conclusions: a majority of students prefer to adopt a primarily aesthetic stance when reading literature; however, there will also be some students who use a primarily efferent stance.

Hickman (1993) gives us a valuable insight into what happens when students are busy making aesthetic connections to literature. She says of a fourth and fifth grade classroom, "In the 4-5 class, the single most characteristic response event was intensive attention to books. Only at these grade levels did readers become so engrossed in a story that they

became oblivious to their surroundings" (p. 350). Through the work of many researchers (Cox and Many, 1992b; Golden and Handloff, 1993; Hickman, 1981; Lehman and Scharer, 1993; Many, 1991; Nissel, 1987), it has been found that there is a strong tendency to give aesthetic type responses.

When looking closer at the efferent and aesthetic stances, it has been suggested that age is a contributing factor in the type of stance assumed. Numerous studies (Galda, 1990, 1992, Many, 1989a, 1991; Many and Anderson, 1992) have been conducted to determine what effect age has on the stance taken by a reader, and they found that age does have relevance to the stance assumed. In general, students from kindergarten through high school do respond aesthetically; however, it was noted that as students become older (from elementary school to high school), they grow more complex in the type of aesthetic responses they give. Research suggests that as students become older, they have had more life experiences upon which to draw. This experience helps students to make more connections to the aesthetic mode of response. Naturally, as students become older, their ability to make aesthetic responses becomes better. Age can be a predictor as to the stance assumed by students.

Efferent and aesthetic responses have also been examined with regards to the gender of the reader. That is, do males and females differ, efferently or aesthetically, in the types of responses given to literature. The research examining this question is extremely scarce and thus suggests that more research needs to be conducted to examine gender differences in responses given to literature (Schweickart, 1986). Research involving elementary students is limited, while a majority of the research has focused on high school students. One such study by Beech and Freedman (1992) indicated that males are more efferent in their responses, while females are more aesthetic in their responses. This does, however, give some insight into how the stance assumed in the years prior to adolescence can affect a student's responses in high school. The small body of research shows that as young as fifth grade, students are already showing differences in the types of responses given when factored by gender.

In 1989, Hutchins examined the gender preferences for reading styles with fifth grade students. She found that males expressed a utilitarian or efferent purpose for reading. Hutchins also found that females tend to be more experiential or aesthetic in preference.

Gormley (1992) examined responses given by sixth graders to literature. She found that males' responses to literature tended to be more efferent. Females tended to be more aesthetic. These two studies help to indicate that, possibly, in the intermediate grades,

students discover a reading preference style and then act upon them in their responses to stories. The lack of research examining efferent/aesthetic reading and gender is scarce and leaves room for additional analysis and consideration for the future.

When looking at literature used in the classroom, the transactional theory helps to suggest that the type of literature used will impact the type of responses given to literature. Specifically, when looking at female characters, one will discover that there is stereotypical literature depicting females. For example, female characters are often shown as home makers, mothers, teachers, and ballet dancers (D'Angelo, 1989; Many, 1989b). Student bonding with the characters will determine whether an aesthetic transaction occurs during the reading. A connection to females in either traditional or non traditional roles will have an impact as to whether females read the text efferently or aesthetically. If females are portrayed in non traditional roles such as construction workers or auto mechanics, responses will be quite different than if females are depicted in traditional roles such as nurses or secretaries. Anderson and Many (1992) undertook a study to examine children's responses to characters in traditional and non traditional roles. This study used eight to ten year old children, and specifically examined responses on an aesthetic basis. They found that when students were asked to write a free response to a story, students were busy making aesthetic responses rather than focusing on the roles of the characters. Responses were not affected by characters in traditional or non traditional roles.

When tying together the areas of efferent and aesthetic reading, gender, age, and literature, the research begins to create a very thorough picture of a child employing the transactional theory of reading. This field of research is, however, also scarce. Tavenner (1993) conducted a study to examine transactional theory, gender, ethnicity, and character ethnicity. Her findings indicate that African Americans preferred reading about African Americans and that European Americans preferred reading about European Americans. All females were found to focus responses with more aesthetic aspects of the stories and wrote longer responses, while males tended to focus on the events in the stories.

Another small body of research was found looking at character preference. This helps to combine literature, gender, and efferent/aesthetic reading together. If students read about what they prefer, then an aesthetic transaction is most likely to occur. Three studies (Johnson, Peer, and Baldwin, 1984; Bleakley, Westerberg, and Hopkins, 1988; Lowther and Sullivan, 1993) reached the same conclusions. That is, readers preferred to read about characters who were the same age. Fourth grade students liked to read about fourth

graders, while sixth graders liked reading about sixth grade students. Additionally, it was concluded that males like to read about males and females like to read about females. Johnson et al. (1984) did find an interesting highlight to their research. Though students tend to like to read about same gender character, as males increased in age, female characters became increasingly more important to male readers. Perhaps this finding continues to support the fact that male readers are reading more efferently, since a personal connection or bond to the characters is not as likely to occur for male readers.

Finally, it is important to understand which stance is being assumed by students in order that educators and parents can better understand a student's thought processes and his or her responses to literature. It is ultimately the reader's choice as to the stance assumed; yet, factors outside the reader can affect which stance the reader decides to adopt. It is the understanding of the efferent and aesthetic stances which helps educators, parents, and others to understand the types of connections children are making to literature. By understanding the stances readers are assuming towards literature within the classroom, teachers can gain greater insights into their students' thinking, understanding, and attitude towards a piece of literature.

Statement of the Problem

Rosenblatt espouses that the aesthetic stance is the one to be preferred when reading literature (1982, 1991, 1992, 1994). However, it appears to be the efferent stance that is focused on during reading. Many (1989a, 1991) concluded that students in grade four do respond in an aesthetic manner. Fourth grade students respond aesthetically, though the complexity of their answers varies, and in general are lower level responses with varying degrees of complexity in connections to their own lives. Fourth grade students are also more likely to give an efferent response than are older students. This may indicate that as students get older, they are having literary transactions with books that are producing even more aesthetic responses. These literary transactions still need to be strengthened with students of all ages.

Given the fact that students do show a tendency to respond aesthetically, the problem then becomes are males and females responding more efferently or aesthetically in these reading events? The individual responses have been examined by researchers in terms of stance and age differences, but gender has rarely been considered. Therefore, the central question concerns gender differences in responses to literature.

Statement of the Purpose

The overall purpose of this study is to examine gender differences in reader response

entries on an efferent to aesthetic continuum when exposed to literature containing female main characters.

The following research questions will be addressed:

- 1) Do efferent and aesthetic responses to literature with female main characters differ between male and female students in fourth grade?
- 2) Do personal levels of understanding of literature with a female main character differ between male and female students in fourth grade?

These questions were devised with the help of the measurement designed for Measuring Responses on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum, as developed by Many (1989a) and in a later study, by Cox and Many (1992b).

Definition of Terms

Transactional

For this study, transactional is defined as the ongoing relationship between the reader and the text. That is, the text and reader are always interacting to help form the understanding or lived through experience of the story. This term stresses the importance of both the reader and text without dominance being given to either element.

Efferent Stance

The efferent stance implies the type of reading done when one is seeking new information or is reading to learn. When one is reading to gain knowledge or information from the text, one is reading from the efferent stance. This stance is concerned with what the reader carries away after reading the text.

Aesthetic Stance

The aesthetic stance implies the type of reading that is done when one can relate to what the character is going through and can apply this to his or her life. The reader is concerned with how the story can be related to his or her life and is focused on how the story affects him or her personally. The reader is attempting to create a lived through experience with the text.

Main Character

A main character is a character who is fully developed, and who has many character traits, both good and bad. It is a character who has most of the characteristics of real people (Tompkins and McGee, 1993). The main character comprises a majority of the story line and the story revolves around this character.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When one begins to examine the broad category of readers' responses to literature, one may discover many theories, ideologies, and categories of responses. The common thread of reader response is that, in some part, many reader response theories stem from the work of Louise M. Rosenblatt. Since 1938, when her first book Literature as Exploration was published, a new theory of responding to literature was presented. The theories and ideas expressed in this book served as a starting point for her theory of reading coined "transactional theory". Rosenblatt states, "The transactional phrasing of the reading process underlines the importance of both elements, reader and text, in any reading event" (1994, p.18). This interplay between reader and text is the underlying premise of her work and lays the groundwork for all of reader response in general. In all that follows, it will be Louise Rosenblatt's ideology, methodology, and beliefs that focus this study and the researcher's quest for further understanding the nature of efferent and aesthetic stances of reading.

This review of literature is divided into 4 categories. First, the review of literature will examine the definition and components of transactional theory as originated by Louise Rosenblatt. These components include the reader, the text, the poem, and the efferent and aesthetic reading stances.

The second body of research will examine the efferent and aesthetic stances. Within the research, the type of stance assumed is explored with regards to several factors. How do students, in general, tend to respond to literature? How does age affect the types of stance assumed? Next, a very small body of research will examine gender differences in students responding efferently or aesthetically. The third major area of research will examine responses to literature with female main characters. How do males and females respond to female characters? Finally, the research will examine combinations of factors related to these bodies of research (i.e., the reading preferences of fourth grade students). The examinations of all the combinations of research helps to more completely paint what happens when a reader assumes the stance he/she does and helps one to fully understand why a given stance is assumed. In a little less than sixty years, Louise Rosenblatt has created a new theory of reading, as well as an entirely new way of viewing the importance of the reader and stance within the reading process. It is the notion of efferent and

aesthetic reading that has enabled teachers to better understand their students' approach to and understanding of a story.

Transactional Theory

To begin to fully understand and appreciate the efferent and aesthetic reading stances, it is important to examine Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading. This theory emphasizes the interaction of the text and the reader. In 1969, Rosenblatt began to explain the roots of her theory and her designation of the term transaction. Rosenblatt cites Arthur Bentley (1949) and John Dewey (1950) as the founders of the term transaction, which, Rosenblatt states, is the most appropriate for the dynamics of the reading process in which she believes. Rosenblatt (1969) cites Dewey and Bentley's term transaction to "designate situations in which the elements of factors are, one might say, aspects of the total situation in an ongoing process" (p. 43).

The work of Dewey and Bentley were instrumental in helping Rosenblatt to define and develop her theory. Their work entails the very premise Rosenblatt uses to define transactional theory. The history of the term and use of transaction dates back to when Bentley and Dewey first coined it. What started off for Dewey and Bentley as a view for the educational process has turned out to be the basis of a theory of reading and literature which has affected how hundreds and even thousands of people view and teach reading.

After examining a very brief history behind the transactional terminology, it is vital to examine some of the major premises of Rosenblatt's transactional view of reading. Overall, there are five main facets to this theory, as outlined by the researcher (Mandura, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1991, 1994; Peck, 1992; Probst, 1981, 1988, 1991; and Wilson, 1981). The first premise has been touched on slightly, and that is that a transaction must occur. For Rosenblatt, this is a transaction between the reader and the text (Mandura, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1969, 1982, 1983, 1991, 1994; Wilson, 1981). The transaction that is created when the reader and the text interact produces how the story is read, interpreted, and known to the reader. Rosenblatt states that a reader is always responding to what is being read.

Mandura (1995) states, "the transaction occurs as we read and discuss a text; we contribute our own personal experiences and reactions to ideas expressed by the writer" (p. 111). The reader and the text both have important components to bring to the transaction that is created. For Rosenblatt, the transactional process entails the importance of the reader and the text, which both contribute significantly.

The reader is the next component to the transactional theory of reading. Rosenblatt

states that the reader is central to the reading process and says the importance of the reader must never be overlooked. Rosenblatt (1994) believes, "The reader is often mentioned, but is not given center stage. The reason for this is simple; the reader is usually cast as a passive recipient, whether for good or ill, of the impact of the work" (p. 4).

The reader brings much to the reading of any text. This includes many things such as knowledge, gender, social class, culture, background experiences, as well as other circumstances that make each reader unique and unlike any other person. Each reader has had different upbringings, cultural experiences, school experiences, and other interactions with one's world. "The student will bring to his reading the moral and religious code and social philosophy assimilated primarily from his family and community background" (1994, p. 93). Rosenblatt feels that often one's background is neglected in the reading process.

Probst (1988) stresses the importance of what Rosenblatt conveys when he states, "The reader's background, feelings, memories, and associations called forth by the reading are not only relevant, they are the foundation upon which understanding of a text is built" (p. 379). Probst feels that what Rosenblatt espouses suggests that the personal reading of a text should not be suppressed, but instead, one should welcome the individuality that each reader brings to a given text.

In the transactional theory of reading, the text is another key component. Just like the reader, the text also contributes its own unique qualities. Rosenblatt contends that the text is simply a road map or "blank slate" waiting for the reader to bring his/her experiences to the text in order that the words can then be interpreted and understood by the reader. When discussing the text and the task of the reader, Rosenblatt (1994) states that the text is merely a guide in the reading process and the reader must use the text in this way. Rosenblatt (1981) contends that, "The text is merely empty squiggles or signs on the page until some reader brings to it the experiences and ability to make meaning out of those signs" (p. 5). The reader must decide how the text will be understood. It's how these signs are interpreted and understood that determine how the text will be read. Rosenblatt believes that the text needs to be open to interpretation but constrained enough to not allow for a free for all on interpretations. Often, the understanding of a text is contingent upon what the reader brings to it.

The next area of transactional theory is the culmination of a "poem" as event. This poem is created before, during, and after the reading of any text (Cox Many, 1992a; Probst, 1981, 1991; Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1994). By poem, Rosenblatt

implies more than the mere genre of poetry. She says, "poem presupposes a reader actively involved with a text and refers to what he makes of his responses to the particular set of verbal symbols" (1994, p. 12). This poem implies a category of aesthetic transactions between reader and text without implying the greater or lesser poeticity of a literary genre. A poem indicates that there has been a lived through experience which leads the reader to bring together the past experience and present personality to the words in the text to create either a new thought, experience, or feeling which is viewed as the poem (Rosenblatt, 1994). It is this delicate transaction between reader and text which creates the poem. This indicates that the poem is extremely personal for each reader. A poem is a unique coming together of a given text and a given reader under unique circumstances (Rosenblatt, 1980).

The preceding discussion of the reader, the text, and the poem leads into the last component of transactional theory, stance. Two types of reading that readers may become involved with are efferent and aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1985, 1991, 1994; Cox and Many, 1992a; Peck, 1992; Probst, 1988). Of all the components of transactional theory, the distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading is the most widely known premise of her theory. This is also the area where the majority of the research has focused and sets the backdrop for the remainder of this literature review. Probst (1988) believes that the stance the reader assumes when coming to the reading of any text is paramount. He, like Rosenblatt, believes that this is also one of the most crucial steps in the whole transactional process.

Efferent and Aesthetic Stance

A reader may assume an efferent or aesthetic stance when reading. The efferent stance occurs when the reader's attention is focused on what happens or remains when a reader has completed a reading task. Rosenblatt (1994) defines efferent reading this way, "In non aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is focused primarily of what remains as the residue after reading- the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out" (p. 23). The term efferent stems from the Latin word "effere," "to carry away." This translates into efferent reading as being concerned with what is carried away after a reading is complete.

There are many examples of efferent reading. For example, the scientist reading a technical report to discover the important chemicals used in a scientific project, in order that he/she can share the information learned or to be able to replicate the study, reading to learn the leaders of the Civil War, or reading to learn about invertebrates. School

classrooms are full of these efferent reading experiences. It is also Rosenblatt's contention that most of a child's school experiences are based on one efferent reading situation after another. Rosenblatt is concerned that students spend too much of their day reading for these purposes. She believes that efferent reading is used far too often when the aesthetic stance would be the most appropriate.

Instead, Rosenblatt contends students need to be involved with the other major stance that can be assumed when reading. This is the aesthetic stance which Rosenblatt (1983, 1994) believes is highly overlooked in schools and classrooms. In the aesthetic stance, "the reader's primary concern is with what happens during the actual reading event" (1994, p. 24). Rosenblatt (1994) states that the reader's primary purpose is "fulfilled during the reading event, as he fixes his attention on the actual experiences he is living through (p. 27)." While the efferent stance is concerned with what remains after the reading of a text, the aesthetic stance is concerned with what occurs during the actual reading of the story. The aesthetic stance is concerned with the reader living through the story. The reader's attention is focused on the feelings, emotions, thoughts, and reactions the words are stirring up. The reader is actively involved in trying to create a relationship with the text where the reader is able to relate and experience what the theme, message, characters, and story says to him or her

Examples of aesthetic reading are more complex. For instance, the reading of a poem which stirs feelings within a reader that helps the reader connect with the poem. A poem about the death of a parent, may be lived through quite vividly if the reader has also experienced the loss of a parent. In school, the reading of Sarah, Plain and Tall may bring forth feelings of a student's loss of a mother or acceptance of a new mother or step mother. For the child who has faced similar adversity to Anna and Caleb, he/she may have a very vivid and "lived through experience" with the text. Another example of aesthetic reading involves relating to stories. After reading Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, no Good Day, students may remember and talk about a horrible day they have had. Whenever a student feels he or she has lived through the events and occurrences of a given text, then that particular child has read aesthetically. It is Rosenblatt's contention, that these lived through, aesthetic reading experiences are ignored at the cost of the seemingly more important efferent reading ventures.

Cox and Many (1992a) posit five categories of aesthetic responses. The categories they suggest are based on Rosenblatt's belief that the aesthetic stance is the most appropriate to assume when reading a literary work. These five types of aesthetic responses are:

1) imaging, 2) picturing, 3) extending, 4) hypothesizing, and 5) relating associations and feelings evoked. Imaging and picturing often go beyond picturing the story world created by the author as they actually enter into the world and envision what it would be like to be the characters themselves. Extending and hypothesizing involve readers going beyond the actual text or hypothesizing how the story could have been different. Here, readers are looking past the story at hand to focus on the story and characters past the printed pages. This is done in order that students connect with the characters and wonder what happens next to the character long after the last page of the story. Finally, relating associations and feelings evoked involves the reader in discussing how the story made them feel and helps to bring up some of those life experiences that may be similar to those of the characters. These five categories that Cox and Many provide help to demonstrate the complexities and importance that aesthetic responses serve as readers interact with a literary work, or merely a given text.

When further examining efferent and aesthetic reading, there are two main distinctions between the stances. These differences help to show two ways in which efferent and aesthetic reading are distinct from each other. The first is the discrepancy between the public and private domain (Rosenblatt, 1991). Rosenblatt refers to primarily efferent reading as the public aspect of sense. This means that all people can share similar knowledge, reach similar conclusions, or carry away the same information. She refers to primarily aesthetic reading as focusing on the private aspect of sense. That is, the reading of a text is private and personal for each reader. No two people will experience the same story the same way. It is this distinction between the public and the private that helps to shape where the reader decides to place his attention, whether through merely looking at the words or by experiencing the story.

Another differentiation to be made by the two types of reading involves selective attention. Rosenblatt (1994) cites William James (1950) for this distinction. Rosenblatt, with the help of James, says that, "Efferent reading will select out the desired referents and ignore subordinate affect. Aesthetic reading, in contrast, will fuse the cognitive and affective elements of consciousness- sensations, images, feelings, ideas- into a personally lived through story or poem" (p. 92-93). This difference of attention also determines which stance the reader will adopt. If an efferent stance is chosen, then the reader will disengage from any personal association with the story. If the aesthetic stance is chosen, primary attention will be given to personal associations in the story.

Rosenblatt (1969, 1980, 1982, 1994) states that the reader's focus of attention (or

stance) during a reading event is of paramount importance. Probst (1988) states, "Although the text may contain strong clues that suggest the appropriate stance, a reader may choose to approach it as either a source of information- efferently- or as a source or poetic experience- aesthetically" (p. 379). It is the reader who decides where the attention will lie.

Rosenblatt (1994) believes that the text often gives us clues as to how the text should be read. Many times, this response to the text is automatic, and the reader is not even aware that a choice in stance has been made. It is the text that helps drive these unconscious ways to approach the words on the page. Rosenblatt (1980) maintains that there are signals given that a text is to be read with an aesthetic stance. These signals include such things as capital letters at each line, clear spaces between words, and lines printed down the center of a page. These indicate a poem, and poetry should always be approached and read with an aesthetic stance. In other words, the text helps to guide the reader to stir up feelings and emotions while the text is being read. The text also imposes on the reader clues or symbols to guide the reader to read with an efferent stance. This may include such things as charts, graphs, formulas, and the like.

Yet, while the text guides the reader and gives clues for the most appropriate stance to be assumed, a single text can be read either aesthetically or efferently. It is the signals and clues in the text that we chose to focus our attention on, which guide the type of stance assumed. Rosenblatt (1994) states, " Many texts are susceptible of being experienced at different points on the continuum by different readers, or even by the same reader under different circumstances" (p. 36). It has been shown that the text is a guide to the type of reading assumed, yet the choice of stance is ultimately up to the reader (Peck, 1992; Probst, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1982, 1991. 1994).

Rosenblatt (1991) suggests that the reader needs to think of the text as written from either a predominately efferent or aesthetic stance. By this, she means that the reader needs to choose to read a text in either a primarily efferent or aesthetic manner, though the reader may pay attention in some part, to both types of stances. Probst (1988) says that the choice of stance is one of the most important decisions a reader makes. When discussing the role of the reader, Peck (1992) sums it up best. " More importantly the reader takes ownership of the choice of reader stance" (p. 10).

The stance the reader assumes may be based in some part on the readers background and knowledge and all the reader brings to the reading experience (Rosenblatt, 1983, 1994). If a reader has not had many aesthetic reading experiences, then it is likely that

he/she will read most texts with an efferent stance, and vice versa. A reader who has had many aesthetic experiences with texts, may have trouble reading for an efferent purpose.

The last important element with regards to efferent and aesthetic stances is the fact that responses occur on a continuum (Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1982, 1991, 1994). These two stances should not be mutually exclusive of each other.

It is more accurate to think of a continuum, a series of gradations between non aesthetic and aesthetic extremes. The reader's stance towards a text- what he focuses his attention on, what is his "mental set" shuts out or permits to enter into his awareness- may vary in multiplicity between the two poles. (Rosenblatt, 1994. p. 4)

Rosenblatt (1991) says that a response can have a mix of efferent and aesthetic elements. It has been stated that a reader adopts a primary stance, yet responses can also fall in the middle of the continuum. Readers whose stance falls in the middle of the continuum need to be aware that a predominate stance has not been assumed and may need to consciously choose either a predominately efferent or aesthetic stance. This is important because the reader will be reading with a more defined purpose and understanding of the text if a predominate stance is chosen.

While a predominate stance is to be assumed, Rosenblatt (1980, 1982, 185, 1991, 1994) says that during reading, a response may shift its focus. That is, a reader may shift between aesthetic and efferent reading within the same text. At one point in the reading, a reader may be giving more selective attention to the aesthetic nature of the story. At another given point, the same reader may be looking at the more efferent points to the text. However, the predominate stance may be aesthetic at the completion of the transaction with the text.

It is this concept of gradations in response that allow for the various ways in which a reader's attention may be focused within a reading event (Rosenblatt, 1991). If attention is drawn to the lived through experiences of the story, then a reader's response will fall on the aesthetic side of the continuum. If attention is given equally to the efferent and aesthetic elements, responses will fall in the middle of the continuum.

This notion of reader stance is where a large body of research has been conducted. Researchers (Cox and Many, 1992b; Golden and Handloff; 1993; Hickman, 1981; Lehman & Scharer, 1993; Nissel, 1987; Many, 1992) have begun to focus research efforts on the stance readers assume while reading. Much of the research that is available strays from Rosenblatt's original view of reading. Rosenblatt (1993, 1994) writes that the early

eighties began to see research focus on the stances taken when reading, while the nineties have seen even more prolific research and has seen a resurgence to the true theories and ideas espoused by Rosenblatt.

Hickman (1981) was among one of the first people to see the importance of Rosenblatt's theory of stance when reading. She contends that aesthetic type responses can and are given by students. In her study, she examined responses given by five to eleven year old students. Hickman conducted a four month ethnographic study, and during that time, she observed three different classrooms. These were mixed aged classes consisting of K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 classrooms. She kept anecdotal records in a daily log as to the type of activities and behaviors occurring during reading time.

At the end of the four month period, she sorted responses into categories that were pre-assigned before data collection occurred. These categories included the ways children responded to books. They also included activities that could be considered efferent and aesthetic. The activities incorporated such things as listening behaviors, contact with books, oral responses, actions and dramas, making things, and writing. These were some of the commonly used activities teachers used to help employ the aesthetic stance (Martinez and Roser, 1991). Her research indicated that as students gained in maturity and age, students generally become more concerned with aesthetic type responses. Hickman did say that she saw behaviors that indicated aesthetic like connections being made in all grades. For example, she found that children as young as kindergarten and first grade showed aesthetic types of behaviors. Though their age does not permit for as much written responses, they did use the aesthetic mode when responding and listening to stories. For example, moving closer to the teacher as she read, asking to hear the story again, and acting out the story with the character in a new situation. First graders would ask to hear the same story again. This is indicative of what aesthetic readers do. The nature of responses, Hickman says, reflected language and cognitive ability. Hickman found that children in all grades were never too busy to just talk about the book. The students were also trying to re-experience the story and have their personal responses affirmed by others.

The 2-3 grade group was found to focus on more efferent type responses. They wanted to show their knowledge of the story and the story events. More concern was placed on demonstrating knowledge than experiencing the story. Even with this concern for efferently based reading, some students still showed concern for the aesthetic elements.

The 4-5 classroom was more concerned with making aesthetic responses to literature. It begins to make sense that this classroom would be more complex in the types of responses

given. She gives the following example from her field notes,

C. is sitting cross-legged on the carpet by the bookcase, reading Charlotte's Web by E.B. White. Teacher lines group up for lunch, they file out through double doors. C. suddenly realizes she is alone, jumps up and follows, eyes still in book (p. 350).

This is a prime example of how students might become when they are reading aesthetically and are reading with the purposes set forth by the individual reader. The 4-5 group was also greatly interested in talking about the meaning within the story. This indicates that these children, in fourth and fifth grade, were busy trying to find the message in the story. They were more interested in connecting the story to their lives, rather than focusing on the details from the story. It is believed that Rosenblatt would find such behaviors as showing the importance of aesthetic experiences with literature and the importance of teaching reading this way.

Nissel (1987) examined oral responses to realistic fiction and fantasy. In her research, she focused on the responses of three fourth grade students. She did this in order to examine responses in depth and in order to fully ascertain the readers interaction with the text. Her research indicates that when making aesthetic type responses, students use personal purpose to help create unique responses to literature. For all three students, different personal connection were made. Nissel found that all the girls predominately responded to the characters in the story and also to certain story events. This is indicative of Rosenblatt's notion that relating to the characters and story events are what lead to the text being read with an aesthetic stance.

Nissel broke responses into text based and reader based responses. Text based responses can be likened to the efferent reading stance, including such things as discussing story events, theme, and plot. Reader based responses parallel aesthetic responses. This includes responding by connecting personal experiences to the story, expressing feelings evoked by the story, and an over all personalizing of the story.

Nissel found that all three students used the aesthetic mode to respond to most of the stories. She says the present study, "found that 4th grade students predominately respond to the characters in the story" (p.151). One student, Davi, was intent on trying to increase her knowledge about life. It was found that students did not make distinctions between reality or fantasy when choosing the stance to be assumed. They were just busy trying to connect their lives to the story. Nissel supports Rosenblatt's idea of an interaction between the reader and text. When students are responding orally to these two genres, students do interact with the text in such a way that the aesthetic elements become the focus.

Research in the early 1990's has found a new interest in examining Rosenblatt's transactional theory. This renewed interest in transactional theory focused on the reading stances that can be assumed when reading. Many (1992) is one such researcher who has examined whether students respond aesthetically or efferently. In 1992, she researched the type of responses 4th, 6th, and 8th grade students gave to realistic fiction.

The sample consisted of 43 fourth grade students, 47 sixth grade students, and 40 eighth grade students. The study employed the use of three different realistic short stories. These were: 1) The Runaway, 2) The Dollar's Worth, and 3) The Secret of the Aztec Doll. For each story, subjects read and responded freely to the following question, "Write anything you want about the story you just read" (p. 171). Data was collected on three occasions over a nine week period. Responses were then categorized by response types. Many used a modified version of The Instrument for Measuring Reader Response on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum (Cox and Many, 1992b). The three response types were: 1) primarily efferent, 2) no primary focus or stance, and 3) primarily aesthetic responses.

In her results, Many found main effects for text, which indicates that text is an important factor in determining whether students assume an efferent or aesthetic stance. Grade was not found to be a significant effect. In the efferent cluster, responses tended to center on a retelling or synopsis of the story. The second content cluster for efferent responses focused on literary analysis, where students wrote about how the story was written. Responses which fell into the no primary focus category contained answers that were either undeterminable or contained elements of both efferent and aesthetic stances, which made it impossible to determine a predominate stance. When examining the aesthetic cluster, responses contained elements of: 1) discussing his/her favorite part, 2) associating with the story, 3) making judgments of characters and events, 4) interpreting the story, and 5) integrating the topic or world and literary knowledge into a unified whole. The majority of responses centered around students connecting characters and events to their own lives.

Though her study was to look at general tendencies of students, some interesting results were found with regards to specific grades. First, Many found that in general, students will adopt a predominate stance, whether efferent or aesthetic. The number of efferent and aesthetic responses were virtually identical. While this looks discouraging, it still indicates that the aesthetic stance is being employed by fourth grade students. Fourth and sixth grade students had more efferent type responses, while eighth grade students were able to give more detailed and thorough aesthetic responses. This is likely due to the

greater wealth of background experiences and literary knowledge each of these readers brings to the reading transaction.

Many supports the use of a predominate aesthetic stance. She contends that children need to be helped to use selective attention to focus on the more aesthetic nature of reading. These results do support Rosenblatt's thesis that a predominate stance is taken within any reading. It is by examining the work of researchers such as Many, that educators will understand that all readers will read the same text very differently.

Cox and Many (1992b) also examined reader stance, but compared this stance to film as well as literature. The results were somewhat surprising. Cox and Many found that students tend to respond more aesthetically to books than to film. Given the multitude of multimedia experiences of children today, it would not have been surprising had the opposite resulted. Cox and Many had thirty eight fifth grade students respond to four books and five films. The movies were: 1) The Case of the Elevator Duck, 2) The Tap Dance Kid, 3) The Fur Coat Club, 4) Very Good Friends, 5) Granny Lives in Galway. Books read were: 1) Where the Red Fern Grows, 2) The Summer of the Swans, 3) The Great Gilly Hopkins, and 4) Philip Hall Likes Me, I Reckon Maybe. Data was collected biweekly. Students wrote a written response to each film or book after its completion. The prompt given was: "Write anything you want about the book (film) you just read (saw)."

After responses were written, data was then collected and analyzed with the use of two continuums. The first continuum had a five point scale, 1-5, to determine how aesthetically or efferently students responded. A 1 was the most efferent stance, while a 5 was the most aesthetic stance. Answers could fall anywhere on this continuum. A 3 response indicated that no primary stance could be identified or that an answer contained equally the efferent and aesthetic stances. The second classification system examined levels of personal understanding. This helped to characterize an individual reader's creation and interpretation of a personally meaningful story. Personal level of understanding was examined on a four point scale. A 1 indicated the reader was looking at the world of the text and took the story at its literal meaning. A 4 indicated that the reader applied the story to his/her life and went way beyond the literal events of the story. Since two researchers scored these responses, inter rater reliability was established at .84 for stance and .79 for personal understanding.

In general, the results indicate that students are using an aesthetic stance when responding to film and books. With regards to books, sixty two percent of responses fell within the primarily aesthetic and most aesthetic categories, a score of 4-5. This indicates

that students are connecting literature to their own lives. An example of a five response is, "...I thought it was kind of stupid because it didn't make me feel good. It made me feel like I was lost in the woods instead of the boy" (p. 51). This response helps to show how the reader went past mere story events to show how the story has affected him personally.

Regarding stance, students responded more aesthetically to books than film. Students used the most aesthetic stance (a score of 5) 27.3% of the time when responding to books and only 14.7% of the time when responding to film. In order to determine if this difference was statistically significant, an analysis of variance was calculated between mean stances taken by each child for books and films. The results did indicate a significance. "Students did use statistically more aesthetic responses, $F(1, 37) = 5.87$, $p < .05$, when responding to books (p. 54)." These results are encouraging and indicate that from an early age, students have possibly been given chances to respond aesthetically to books as well as film.

Cox and Many state, when students respond more aesthetically higher levels of understanding should also be found. Only 6% made the most applications to life, while 48% of students did not go beyond level one understanding for either books or film. This highest level of personal understanding is indicative of a level four response. A little over 50% of students were able to respond beyond the literal level of the story. This helps to indicate that half of the students can apply the story in some way to the world around them. These results are similar to the results on stance assumed by readers. For the most part, students are responding aesthetically and are at such a level of understanding that these aesthetic responses are being applied to the world around them.

This research by Cox and Many helps to support Rosenblatt assertion that when the aesthetic stance is chosen, students will better understand what they have read (Rosenblatt, 1994). Their research also supports Rosenblatt's contention that a predominate stance is always assumed within any reading transaction (Rosenblatt, 1969, 1980, 1982, 1990, 1994). In summary, Cox and Many state that present research shows, "The portrait of a fifth grader which emerges in this study is one of a child who basically responds aesthetically a majority of the time when allowed to respond freely. This child is also one who develops understanding beyond the simplest literal level the majority of the time (p. 66)."

Golden and Handloff (1993) also examined transactional theory and reader stance. In their research they examined responses to literature through journal writing. The study used fifth grade students. The responses came from journals kept for a reader workshop

approach to reading. Their research indicates that most responses are narrational in type, followed by literary judgment, personal, and interpretive. Literary judgment has efferent qualities to it, while personal responses contain aesthetic qualities. The percentages of responses were as follows: literary judgment .26, personal .17, interpretive .15. Other responses were given but comprise a very small percentage of the responses. They found that a majority of answers contained a mix of literary judgment, personal, and narrational. In Rosenblatt's phrasing, this is an answer which falls near the middle of the efferent and aesthetic continuum and contains both efferent and aesthetic stances.

In conclusion, Golden and Handloff state that their study helped to find that different groups of children were oriented towards different response patterns. This was evident over a range of books. Finally, they state:

The group analysis of the journal entries offered insights into how a group of average fifth grade readers respond to books as well as the kinds of books they read. While the predominate response was narrational, the analysis showed that children were engaging with literature in a variety of ways, including making literary judgments, connecting personally with literature, and interpreting the literature. (p. 183)

Lehman and Scharer (1993) used an aesthetic/efferent type distinction to examine the differences between adult and child readers. They wanted to determine if adults or children gave more reader or text based responses. To make the differentiation between the two types of responses, they categorized responses as either reader based or text based. Answers in the reader based categorization included elements such as: identification/feelings, experience/background, and evaluation. Text based responses included one or more of the following components: characterization, plot, foreshadowing/suspense, theme, and writer's craft. These can be likened to what Rosenblatt terms efferent or aesthetic. Text based responses are efferent, reader based responses are aesthetic.

The adults sample consisted of 129 people enrolled in five different university's children's literature classes. The student sample, 140 students, was drawn from classrooms, grades 3-8. Adults read and made written responses to Sarah, Plain and Tall, while children either read or were read the same book. Children kept journals, drew pictures, and/or participated in discussions with adults. The two samples were then brought together and a whole group discussion followed. After this whole group discussion, students then responded in writing to the following two questions: 1) Describe

new insights gained about Sarah, Plain and Tall and 2) Reflect upon this assignment and the class discussion as a whole and explain any conclusions you would draw about the comparison of adults' versus children's responses to Sarah, Plain and Tall.

Data was then analyzed using four levels of analysis. Each level looked for elements of either reader based or text responses. Data analysis revealed that initial responses by both children and adults were more reader based than text based. However, the children's responses tended to be more reader response based than were the adults for all four levels. Lehman and Scharer (1993) also state that "They [children] shared strong responses to the relationship and feelings of characters with whom they could identify and to certain events that captured their imagination" (p.7). They also found that children were more able to identify with the child characters and expressed strong feelings over the story and showed more concern for Caleb, one of the central characters in the book.

Children were also more likely than adults to relate the book to their own lives, such as moving or sibling relationships. The book Sarah, Plain and Tall was often compared to the "Little House" books, by children. This indicates that connections were being created by children. Lehman and Scharer did note that the background knowledge was much more limited for the children. This is most likely due to less life experience than adults.

On the reverse side, they found that adults focused much more on the text based aspects of the story. Adults were able to discuss the plot, characterizations, and writer's craft more than the children. They were more likely to write about how the author wrote the book or to discuss specific events from the story. This research helps to support several premises made by Rosenblatt. First, the knowledge and background one brings to a story affects what is focused on and responded to. Adults have had much more experience examining an author's writing style and have had many more years in school to be shown how to examine this. Therefore, it makes sense that adults would be able to discuss the more efferent aspects of literature. These results are also indicative of the fact that children should be reading with a predominately aesthetic stance. Somewhere within a child's education, the emphasis on aesthetic responses to literature are being replaced with an efferent approach and emphasis to literature. Rosenblatt would agree with Lehman and Scharer (1993) when they state, "Finally, we believe that children can enhance adults' responses to books with their attention to detail, their curiosity and desire to learn, and their ability to get in touch with personal feelings" (p. 13). Rosenblatt contends it is this quality to connect with personal feelings that must be maintained in any reading transaction that occurs (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Not only has stance been examined, but so has age. Once it is determined that there is a predominate stance assumed by readers, it becomes important to see how age affects the stance assumed (Galda, 1990, 1992; Many, 1989a, 1991; Many and Anderson, 1992). Martinez and Roser (1991) believe that research findings indicate that age level differences equate to cognitive and developmental differences. The findings that follow support the contention that developmental differences among readers do exist. In general, all three researchers (Galda, 1990, 1992; Many 1989a, 1991; Many and Anderson, 1992) found that age does affect stance. The older a student becomes, from elementary age to high school, the responses become much more complex and aesthetic in nature (Many, 1989a). As students become older, their knowledge of the world increases as do their life experiences (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Many (1989a, 1991) helps to support this contention. In her research, she had two primary purposes. First, she wanted to examine the effects of a reader's stance in a response and the reader's grade level. Second, she wanted to explore the relationship between stance, level of understanding, and story rating. Her sample was drawn from fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students. Subjects were drawn from a stratified cluster sample, and ultimately included 43 fourth graders, 47 sixth graders, and 40 eighth graders.

Students read to themselves three realistic short stories and responded in writing in a free response method. Students also rated the selection using a specialized instrument. Over a nine week period, data was collected on three different occasions. The data (responses) were then coded on three different scales. These were: 1) level of understanding through the Instrument for Rating a Readers Level of Personal Understanding, 2) stance by The Instrument for Measuring Reader Stance on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum, and 3) rating by The Category Coding System. Using a two way analysis of variance, it was found that grade had a slight impact on stance, but an even bigger difference emerged for levels of understanding.

Grade, in this study, was not the most important factor on stance because the aesthetic stance did seem to be preferable at all three grade levels. However, the sophistication of the types of responses did increase with grade. She found that with age, "The tendency to apply the story events to the world increased with grade, with 39.8% of the sixth grade responses and 41.4% of the eighth grade responses falling at levels 3 and 4" (p. 81). With the levels of understanding continuum, this indicates a 3 or 4 response as being applied to the world around them.

The main effect in this study was not necessarily stance, as stated, but level of

understanding. She found that fourth graders consistently had a lower level of understanding than eighth graders, indicating that age was a significant factor in the level of understanding reached in free written responses. In general, Many found that as students progressed from fourth to sixth to eighth grade, their level of understanding increased.

The contention by Cox and Many (1992b) that stance and level of understanding are strongly correlated was confirmed. As with this study, when the aesthetic stance is assumed, higher levels of personal understanding are also achieved. "It would seem that when students focus on the story experience rather than an analysis of the work, they are more likely to relate it and find it meaningful in terms of their own lives" (p. 103).

Many (1991) reached the same conclusions. She found that age did affect the stance and type of response given by students. Eighth grade students gave more complex responses than did fourth grade students. While students in all grades were able to respond aesthetically, the levels of personal understanding were higher as students increased in age.

Galda (1990, 1992) has also researched efferent and aesthetic responses with respect to age. In the research, she likens the aesthetic stance to that of a spectator who has freed him or herself from the confines of the text. Galda (1990) states the following about the parallels of spectator and aestheticism, "Response to literature from an aesthetic or spectator stance is mainly evaluative (Harding, 1987) and involves living through the story as a virtual experience while withholding judgments until the story is completed (p. 262)." In her view, the spectator stance is representative of the aesthetic stance in that there is a lived through experience and a relating of the story to individual lives. Her research also stresses the importance of both reader and text factors (Galda 1990, 1992).

She has also used her spectator stance to examine if responses changed as students got older. In 1986, she followed 36 students in grades fourth, sixth, and eighth over a four year period. This was a longitudinal study beginning Spring 1986 and continued for the next three years. Over the span of the four years, twenty three students were unable to complete this study for various reasons, such as moving. The final results were based on eight of the twelve students that remained. There were four girls and four boys.

Galda's intent was to study students' oral response across four years to realistic fiction and fantasy. She also wanted to determine if responses given changed as students became older. Galda looked at the interaction between the literature and age of the reader. Responses were gathered from discussions lead by Galda. Prompts were given to students such as, "Tell me about the story" or "So you felt that...?" Discussions were thirty minutes

in length. The reading and discussion cycle took approximately two weeks at a time to complete. After discussions, students wrote a response to the story. Independent raters then ranked responses.

Results indicated that the spectator or aesthetic stance does change as readers become older. She found that the fourth grade students gave analytical (or efferent) responses, but as the students grew in age and maturity, responses became more categorical. These categorical responses can be likened to aesthetic or spectator responses. Also, as readers matured, they began to show more usage of the spectator stance. This is indicative of the fact that as readers mature, they are able to look beyond themselves to examine the world around them. Rosenblatt (1983) states that knowledge of literary elements and literature as a whole helps readers to go beyond the most efferent stances. Galda's (1992) findings support this notion. She says, " They also became more familiar with more literature, more knowledgeable about how literature works, and more concerned with understanding a wide variety of literature" (p.138). Galda indicates that this has helped students learn to enjoy fantasy, as well as to free them from the more analytical, efferent type of responses.

She determined that age does affect stance taken, and as students become older they are able to give more in-depth responses which indicate an application of a lived through experience with realistic fiction and fantasy. This study also confirms the work of Many, (1989a, 1991).

Many and Anderson (1992) looked at the effects of grade and stance on readers' intertextual and autobiographical responses to literature. As with Cox and Many (1992b), they used film and books to determine if a difference existed. They used the same sample as Cox and Many (1992b). This was 43 fourth graders, 47 sixth graders, and 40 eighth graders. Three books 1) The Runaway, 2) The Dollar's Worth, and 3) The Aztec Idol were used for this study.

Many and Anderson were interested in three questions. First, is there a relationship between the stance taken in a free response and the types of intertextual or autobiographical connections made? Second, is there a relationship between the grade (age) of the student and the types of intertextual or autobiographical connections made? Third, to what types of literary forms do students at different grade levels refer when they make intertextual connections? Intertextual connections are those where the reader incorporates only information from the text into the written responses. Autobiographical connections are those where written responses include connections to one's own life, that is, relating similar experiences or happenings to the reader within the response.

Intertextual connections are efferent and autobiographical connections are aesthetic.

To examine these questions, students were told to write a free response to the texts using the prompt: "Write anything you want about the story you just read." Two probe questions were then asked to assess whether personal connections were being made to film and literature. These were: (a) Think of any other story, movie, or TV show and tell how it is like the story you just read. (b) Think of anything that has happened to you or to someone you know that reminds you of the story you just read.

Data was analyzed through the use of an adapted form of an instrument to assess aesthetic responses developed by Cox and Many (1989). A classification system was also devised to categorize the probe questions. This was established after the data was collected and analyzed. The following coding system resulted. 0 = No connections made, 1 = Connections made but no elaboration was made to the original story, 2 = Connection made with some elaboration but no elaboration given, 3 = Connection made at a literal level with the student specifying similarities or differences between the work and the association, 4 = Connection made at an interpretive level with the student specifying similarities and differences between the association and the story.

Many and Anderson discovered that there was a relationship with regards to intertextual connections for 2 of the three stories. They found that fourth and sixth grade students were more likely to make intertextual connections but did not tie this to their lives. Responses at these two grades relied on literal sorts of information. It was found that eighth grade students were able to make intertextual connections on an abstract level rather than staying tied to the literal story. This is indicative of what Rosenblatt would consider efferent responses. Fourth grade students tended to focus on intertextual connections, but also included limited and very simple autobiographical responses on a restricted basis.

In contrast, when autobiographical responses and grade were examined, the types of responses were not consistent. When making autobiographical connections to the stories, fewer students made specific mention to the story on a literal or interpretive level. Students were unable to describe a similar event from his/her life to that of the text.

When looking at the probe questions specifically, these indicated that the grade of the reader seems to be related to students' ability to making meaningful connections to literature. In conclusion they state;

Similarly, the findings from this study suggest that when students are asked to describe similarities between what they have read and literary and life experiences, they do not tend to tie the related experience into the story

which has just been read. Instead, they often simply become involved in a free association type of exercise without linking back to the story experience in meaningful ways. (p. 66)

Finally, the results between autobiographical connections and different literary forms indicates that more connections are made to TV shows than to books or movies. This result is unlike that of Cox and Many (1992b) when they compared books and films. Given the amount of television watched by children today, it should not be surprising that more connections are made to this form of art, rather than books or movies.

In summary, transactional theory is an extremely valuable means of teaching reading and literature. It employs the idea that there is a continual transaction between any reader and any text. One must remember that the two stances are not mutually exclusive of each other. Responses can, however, be categorized as predominately efferent or aesthetic. As students become older, from the elementary age to high school age, this preference becomes stronger and responses become even more aesthetic in nature. The transactional theory as espoused by Rosenblatt will need to be revisited by educators so that students can be helped to respond aesthetically in order that they are continually making connections between literature and their own lives. It is by embracing Rosenblatt's theory and notion of reader stance, that students will be able to experience literature and the intrinsic rewards of using an aesthetic approach.

Probst (1991) says that gender is one variable which affects the mode of response made by readers. The very nature of being male or female leads to the differences in the types of responses males and females give to literature. Along with age, gender is another variable to be explored with regards to efferent and aesthetic reading. To focus even more specifically, the question becomes, how does being male or female affect the type of responses given to literature? By understanding the differences between the genders, greater insight can be gained in order to better understand children's responses to literature.

To begin examining transactional theory and gender, the definition of gender needs to be explored. For the sake of this literature review, gender will be defined as biological sex and the experiences one has had to create male, female, masculine, and feminine characteristics. Bleich (1986) states that gender is biological and that there are inherent differences in the way males and females think, communicate, and relate. It is Bleich's contention that this biological difference leads to the differences in which literature is understood. However, little research has been conducted in elementary classrooms examining this issue. Rosenblatt (1983) acknowledges the fact that gender is biological

and she feels that one's gender helps to determine the cultural and societal differences for male and female readers.

The research available is scarce when examining gender difference with regards to efferent and aesthetic reading. The 1991 Handbook on Research Teaching the English Language Arts does not mention one research article exploring gender differences in reader responses to literature with elementary students. It is the contention of researchers (Day, 1994; Flynn, 1986; Schweickart, 1986) that there has been little research in the area of transactional theory and gender. Day (1994) maintains that much empirical research has looked at things such gender schema, but that more research needs to examine the broad area of reader response theory and gender.

There are two ways to look at this lack of research involving transactional theory and gender. First, Schweickart (1986) contends that for far too long the female voice has been ignored in responses to literature, as well as in the fields of literature and reading. When discussing the field of reader response theory, Schweickart (1986) states that, "Until very recently this question has not occurred to reader response critics" (p. 36). The question she refers to is one of gender. She believes that when females enter into literary discussions and thinking, the nature of discourse and conversation will change dramatically. Schweickart ultimately concedes that males and females read the same text very differently.

Flynn (1986) substantiates what Schweickart suggests and believes that research with reader response and transactional theory has focused on high school students and the importance of the text. This is also the second way to account for the lack of available research. Flynn (1986) believes that, "Reading has contributed empirical data on gender-related similarities and differences among developing readers, and feminist literary critics have contributed descriptive studies on the ways in which texts shape responses along gender lines" (p. 236). Fourth grade students are beyond being considered developing readers. Intermediate (grades 4-6) students need to be studied to determine what stance maturing readers use. This claim also supports the notion that behaviors among readers and not written responses by readers have been examined with regards to gender.

Gormley (1992) also supports the fact that little research has been conducted with elementary age students. Gormley states, " Although there have been previous inquiries into gender and writing, their findings are mixed, and moreover are not derived from elementary children's writing" (p. 8). It appears that elementary age populations are being ignored in the field of reader response.

Martinez and Roser (1991) feel that the research is beginning to create a more complete picture of the child reader. "The research on response has begun to sketch a picture of the child as responder, yet the picture that is emerging is by no means complete" (p. 651). Gender is one area where the respondents responses could be further explored to paint a picture that is more complete.

It has been stated that much research has focused on high school students. To support this, extensive reviews of literature by Probst (1991) and Martinez and Roser (1991) indicate several studies with high school students. Probst (1991) mentions a study from 1976 examining gender with high school students. This study examined not only gender, but age as well. The research from this article states that gender differences and age differences can be found when looking at types of responses. Beech and Freedman (1992) have also looked at high school students responses to literature. In their study, they examined adolescents' responses to magazine ads and short stories.

Beech and Freedman maintain that culture can have a great impact on the types of responses given by adolescent males and females. One hundred fifteen eighth and eleventh graders were used to examine this question. Students were asked to respond to four ads portraying women from two popular teenage magazines. These students also responded to two story selections. One story contained females in a more stereotypical role, while the other story had female characters in a less stereotypical role. Students were then asked to write a free response to each ad and story over a three day period. Students were also asked to respond to the following questions. "Would you like to be one of the persons in this ad/story? Why or Why not?" Students also rated the persons and characters on a semantic differential scale. Finally, students wrote a narrative evoked by the ad or story, followed by an inference about the message of the ad or story.

Aesthetic types responses were given for both the ads and stories. However, students were likely to rate the ads more positively than the book characters. Beech and Freedman also found some interesting responses by male students. Male adolescents tended to not like stories which they felt portrayed unpleasant realities. One male responded to a book character this way, "I don't care for more misunderstanding, confusion, and mix ups, especially with relationships" (p. 177). This indicates that this male preferred to focus on the more efferent elements of the story. This response was typical for the male students. Beech and Freedman go on to say that males tended to distance themselves from the ads and characters. Females, on the other hand, were found to interpret the stories and to discuss the interpersonal relationships of story characters. These researchers' findings are

consistent with the statements cited earlier from Flynn (1986) and Bleich (1986). Not only did Beech and Freedman find differences in the stance male and female adolescents assumed, but like Rosenblatt, they believe that the socialization of males and females may be the central contributing factor.

With regards to elementary students, the research is scarce. In his extensive review of literature, Probst (1991) mentions only a single study. He cites Applebee's 1978 study which indicated that differences between male and female readers were slight. Females were only a little more willing than males to express engagement with a literary work. Cherland (1992), Gormley (1992) and Hutchins (1992) have reached conclusions which indicate that there are more prevalent gender differences in responses. They believe there is a difference between the way male and female students respond to literature when constructing a written response to a story. In general, males tend to focus more on story elements and avoid the personal aspects of a story. Females tend to focus on the relationships of characters and how the story affects them personally.

Cherland (1992) examined gender differences in discussions about literature. This study will help to set the tone for this section of the review of literature and will show how students' discussion of stories translates into how students write about stories. Cherland (1992) believes that males and females respond differently to literature. This is important because it could be this discourse before a written response that may affect where selective attention is drawn and will ultimately determine whether an efferent or an aesthetic response will result.

The research for her conclusions came from a 1988-89 ethnographic research study conducted with sixth grade students. She looked at fourteen specific literature response groups. Groups consisted of mixed males and females, males only, and females only. Group discussions were open ended. Children were asked to talk about the books in any manner they chose. Discussions were audio taped, transcribed, and analyzed to determine the kind of talk used.

Overall, she found two types of gender style talk about books. The first was a discourse of feelings including such things as emotional responses to text, statements of feelings (I liked.... I knew..., I wish...), or relating the reader's feelings with that of the character. Readers were making personal connections to the text. The second kind of discourse was one of action. This style focused on the plot and with what happened in the story. Cherland felt this type of discourse, "reflected a desire to find meaning in the action of the story rather than in human relationships or stylistic devices" (p. 190).

These are reflective of efferent and aesthetic responses. The discourse of feelings is like aesthetic reading. The emphasis in the response focuses on the characters and personal connections being made to the story. The discourse of action is like efferent reading. There is a reliance on story events to guide responses.

Gender differences were found in Cherland's results. The groups that contained only females responded aesthetically. For example, two students in the study said after reading Bridge to Terabithia, that they were sure they would hate Sunday school just as much as Jess hated church. Another female responded after reading Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird this way: "I can relate to that." This is a perfect example of an aesthetic type response. The sixth grade male group was heavily involved with the discourse of action. All male groups focused on a discussion of the story. They did not relate their feelings to the story.

Interestingly, Cherland found that when mixed gender groups discussed literature, both types of discourse were found. However, the discourse of action seemed to prevail. Females were likely to become more engaged in the discourse of action rather than the discourse of feelings. Perhaps, as Schweickart (1986) purports, females are being silenced as they try to participate in literary discussions.

Two studies have looked specifically at written responses, not just oral responses. These two studies work together to complete a well rounded view of the intermediate age reader. Hutchins (1989) in her work examined gender differences in reading preferences. It will become evident that the child's preference for reading from a certain perspective can affect the type of response written to a story. The basic premise of her research was that males and females have different reading style preferences.

She identifies two reading style preferences that readers can assume. These are utilitarian and experiential. Utilitarian reading means that one takes an approach to reading which involves reading to learn information. The reading of a text with an utilitarian approach indicates that one is trying to read with the purpose of gaining new knowledge, finding answers to questions, or carrying away something very specific from the text. The experiential reading preference style indicates that one is reading to experience the events and happenings in the text. Utilitarian reading can be likened to efferent reading, while experiential reading can be likened to aesthetic reading.

Hutchins' study involved 74 fifth grade students. In this study, the questionnaire sent to students was designed to assess what types of reading style preference these fifth grade students possessed. While differences for gender in preference for reading style was not

found to be statistically significant for three of the four classrooms, in one instance it was. Statistical differences were found for the self contained gifted classroom. This classroom showed the most support for Hutchins' hypothesis that males will take a more utilitarian preference towards the reading of a text, while females will be more experiential.

While male responses showed some aspects of both styles, females were much more distinct in assuming an experiential preference. This finding is important and indicates that at some point, female students may be being taught to read aesthetically, while males are perhaps taught to read efferently and aesthetically. Hutchins' states that she agrees with Rosenblatt and others that perhaps there is an emphasis on teaching children to assume an efferent approach to reading. Hutchins asserts that like Rosenblatt, both types of approaches to a text are important and serve very distinct but separate functions. In her closing statement she says, "I hope to encourage both the utilitarian and experiential reading experiences of my students; they deserve the chance to discover the value inherent in each" (p. 70). These words echo those of Rosenblatt and also state the implicit value of different approaches to the reading process.

In 1992, Gormley examined sixth grade students' written responses to literature. Gormley wanted to focus on gender differences in written responses. Did males write different responses from those of female? In this study, one sixth grade classroom was used in a large suburban school. Nine females and eleven males participated in the study. In the classroom, the teacher used a literature based reading program. The study was conducted in September and the first literature selection the classroom teacher chose was Bridge to Terabithia. Journals from this literature selection were used. Each journal entry in the reader response log was analyzed. Journal entries were analyzed for fifteen different types of response categories that could be included in the entries. Some of these things included; total number of scriptal entries (this refers to the number of times the student referred to experiences from his or her own life when responding to the book), teacher initiated scriptal entries, teacher questions, hedges (number of times students qualifies a statement), intensifiers, tags (pertains to classic characteristics of women's language)- used where demonstrative statements are weakened with a closing question or comments, and student questions. Other categories include; total number of proper names used, point of view, feeling statements, and number of words and sentences per day. Two separate raters coded journal responses. If differences existed, then the difference in counts was averaged.

The research found that males and females do write very different responses. For

example, the expression of feeling was significantly different. A Mann Whitney U ($Z = -3.2545$, $p = .001$) indicated that female students were more likely to put feeling into their written entries. Females were much more likely to write their internal responses to a story while males were not. Gormley states that females often made comments such as "I felt sorry for..." or "I feel...." Gormley's findings found that males tended to focus on the story and characters, without discussing any feelings or attitudes about the book. Gormley alluded to the fact that perhaps this is because of cultural constraints and expectations. It was also discussed that perhaps the main character of the book makes a significant difference. In the selection used, the main character is female. Gormley suggests that this may help to account for some of the gender differences found. In closing Gormley says,

At this point our study only suggests significant gender differences with a few features of written language. However, we suspect other differences will emerge as we refine our method of analysis and as we examine more youngsters writings. It is important to increase our understanding of how gender may influence children's writing and teachers' perceptions of what children compose. (p. 18)

This is in fact true. When looking at Gormley's words, it can be seen that more emphasis and research needs to be placed on elementary age students' writings.

When looking at Hutchins' and Gormley's work together, an important point can be made. This is, that by fifth grade, male and female students have chosen a preference for reading styles, whether efferently (utilitarian) or aesthetically (experiential), and by sixth grade, Gormley indicates that writing styles are also becoming different for males and females. These two studies (Gormley, 1992; Hutchins, 1989) suggest that the preferences by fifth grade are the same writing styles being used in sixth grade. Students develop a reading preference and then may act upon this preference in written work. These two studies together indicate the importance of teaching the appropriateness and usefulness of the aesthetic and efferent stances. When dealing with literature, these two studies state the importance of assuming the aesthetic approach to literature. They also connect to show how prevalent gender differences in reading and writing are.

The research on gender and reader stance is extremely scarce. It has been shown that several researchers agree with this premise. A gap in the literature is prevalent and shows that more research needs to be conducted in this field. It is the hope of the researcher to fill this gap. The research on gender differences in written responses employing efferent and aesthetic stances is virtually non-existent. As research increases in this area, the

important contributions of female respondents to literature will increase. The research has also disproportionately focused on high school students. It is by examining elementary age students, that responses by high school students can be better understood. What readers do or don't do in elementary school will significantly impact what is done during the high school years.

Stances Taken with Female Characters

Characters are one of the most important, if not the central element in a story or piece of literature. The characters help to account for how a text is read and the stance assumed towards that piece of writing. If the reader of a text interacts with the story, then the compatibility of the characters with the individual reader will have a big influence. This can lead to an aesthetic stance being assumed. Therefore, it can be assumed that males will relate to and perhaps form more aesthetic bonds with male characters. The same can also be assumed for female readers.

It has been found that on the whole, female characters tend to be a neglected group in stories (D'Angelo, 1989; Many, 1989b; Schweickart, 1986). Hence, females are not being given as many opportunities to relate and bond with female characters. With the absence of female characters, as D'Angelo says, females are left to read literature from a male perspective. Therefore, females may tend to approach many stories with an efferent stance. This is assumed because it has been shown that males have a tendency to use an efferent type approach to literature.

One of the reasons for some of this discrepancy between males and females responding efferently or aesthetically comes from the portrayal of characters in literature. This discrepancy also comes from the absence of female characters in literature and the stereotyping of females. If female readers do not have female characters to identify with, then this can drastically impair aesthetic responses being given.

It has been postulated that a female reader will relate better to female characters and a male reader to male characters (Anderson and Many, 1992; Beaven, 1972; Many, 1989b). It is highly likely that female readers will build stronger bonds to female characters. D'Angelo (1989) states, "The young girl who is exposed to literature of merit written for the adolescent audience reads about young women who experience similar difficulties and who deal with their lives in a realistic manner" (p. 232). The same can also be said for student readers in the intermediate grades (fourth, fifth, and sixth grades). Readers relate to characters who are like themselves.

Gormley (1992) states that the text and characters can affect the responses given to

literature. She believes that the text factors can lead to differences in the ways males and females respond to literature. To create aesthetic situations where females respond aesthetically, literature with more female characters may need to be used.

Rosenblatt (1983, 1994) believes that literature should open the doors for female readers. She feels that literature and the characters in it should liberate women from these stereotypical roles. "The young girl may need to be liberated from the narrow view of the feminine role imposed by her milieu" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 203). She then goes on to state that a wide circle of literary acquaintances can lessen the need of adolescents and children to conform to the culturally dominate pictures of temperamental traits, type of work, and modes of behavior appropriate to each of the genders. For Rosenblatt, it is literature and the characters which have a powerful affect on the reader. The characters can help determine if an efferent or aesthetic stance is assumed towards a piece of literature. The characters can be considered an avenue to determining which stance will ultimately be assumed.

In general, the roles characters are assigned in stories will greatly affect the type of response given. Probst (1991) states that many researchers have found that characters in traditional and non traditional roles do affect the response type given. This can be attributed to the textual difference of characters in various roles. While poetry is found to yield the most aesthetic responses, it is postulated that focusing on characters in dominate and less traditional roles will help to evoke the aesthetic mode of response. Therefore, the research that follows will examine the variances in responses to characters, and specifically female characters, in traditional and non traditional roles.

Another central element to creating aesthetic transactions and stances towards a work is by evoking the characters. In other words, how does the reader begin to bond with the characters so that an aesthetic transaction follows. Rosenblatt believes that there are two ways to evoke a character within a story (1994). The first way to evoke the characters is through empathy and identification. Rosenblatt (1994) believes,

Perhaps our sense of identification with a character is due to a relatively complete merging of evocation and response. Such a character arouses no qualifications, questions, doubts, but on the contrary fits our perceptions, our needs, our own conscious or unconscious potentialities (p. 67).

It is by connecting with the characters that a reader feels a sense of oneness with them.

The second way Rosenblatt states that characters can be evoked is by readers acting as spectators. By this, Rosenblatt believes readers are living through the experiences of the

characters. A reader can view himself or herself as a substitute in the experiences in the story. Rosenblatt goes even farther than this. She contends that the role of spectator is a unique mode of experience that allows the reader to expand his or her own boundaries of the immediate world. By acting as a spectator, the reader is able to go beyond the perimeters of his/her direct world to experience things he or she would normally not be able to. By evoking the characters, the central most important element of the text has been accessed.

To begin examining what the research says, it is important to note the thoughts of Mauro (1983) as cited by Martinez and Roser (1991). He comments that students read with a theory of what is right and wrong for characters. For readers this may entail female characters in traditional or non traditional jobs, roles, and activities. Females in non traditional roles may not fit into the expectations of a reader. The reader may feel that females should be in more traditional roles. This will skew the reading of the text and will give less of an opportunity for an aesthetic stance to be assumed. These words are important because the findings of Mauro are prevalent in the research.

Beaven (1972) looked at adolescent responses to female main characters. Though her study was conducted with high school students, her results help to show how responses from students in high school to female main characters may be shaped by experiences in elementary school. Findings indicated that females identify with the female characters, while males do not. Beaven posits that by kindergarten, both genders view the male roles as more powerful. Beaven also states in her findings that females are identifying with female characters who are not the most positive role models. For example, Hester Prinn was stated to be a character who females admired. Beaven uses examples such as this one to support the notion that more literature needs to be used in schools which portray female characters in positive, non traditional ways. She contends that adolescent females need to be given good role models in literature.

Beaven's concern was that by relating to females in traditional roles, this would help to create the wrong connections to literature. By relating to Hester Prinn, a female reader may reduce her self esteem and show no desire to break out of traditional roles and behaviors. She wanted students to connect with characters in a positive manner where aesthetic responses and attitudes were reflective of the good qualities of female characters.

The impact of female characters in traditional or non traditional roles could significantly impact readers. Exposure to female characters in different capacities should begin in elementary school, if not preschool. This will help female students connect to the female

characters, and thus, create aesthetic transactions with literature.

Scott (1983, 1986) examined the affects of using gender fair materials on students' understanding, interest, and attitudes. She looked at understanding with regards to main characters in either traditional or non traditional roles. This was done for both male and female characters. Scott examined a total of 172 fourth, seventh, and eleventh grade students. Four gender role conditions were present within the stories selected. These were 1) traditional female, 2) non traditional female, 3) traditional male, and 4) non traditional male.

After reading the stories, participants then responded to two questions after each story. These were: 1) Who do you think can do what (the main character) did in the story? and 2) Who do you think should do what (the main character) did in the story? These questions were followed by five possible responses. These included such choices as only females, mostly females, same number of males and females, and mostly males and some females. Scores could range from one to five. A second set of data was collected through an inventory to assess sex role attitudes. This inventory score for each child was added up, with a range from 0 to 29.

Results on the question "Who can do what the main character did?" showed that females were more likely than males to think that both males and females could perform the activity. Fourth graders were less stereotyped than eleventh graders. Results on the second question, "Who should do what the main character did" were similar. Traditional female stories elicited the most female responses, while traditional male stories elicited the most male responses. There was gender balance with regards to stories that were non traditional. To support research findings in this review of literature so far, aesthetic transactions and responses were evoked by relating to the characters in traditional roles.

The results for story interest were varied. Female students generally liked the stories better overall than did male students. Also, fourth grade students liked the stories better than the eleventh grade students. The non traditional female story and the traditional male story were liked least. Traditional roles were always chosen to be those liked by all the students. It can be theorized that aesthetic bonds are being created with stories where the characters are in traditional circumstances, jobs, and activities.

Scott states, "Exposure to male as well as female main characters engaged in non traditional roles increased pupils' perceptions of the number of males or females who can and should participate in these activities" (p. 13). It is interesting to note that fourth graders had the most flexible role attitudes and eleventh graders had the most stereotypical

responses. This helps to indicate how school and societal pressures affect females and males to conform to specific ideas of appropriate behaviors. By discussing traditional roles for male and female characters, this may help to create efferent and aesthetic stances for all readers to literature. By using all characters, male and females, in all types of roles, the realm of aesthetic transactions is broadened for all readers.

Scott (1986) believes that by using more gender fair materials the following will result. "For fourth graders and above, pupil's knowledge about sex roles will be expanded, their judgments about appropriateness shows more flexibility, and neither their interest in reading or comprehension be diminished" (p. 115).

Many (1989b) also looked at different types of written responses and female characters. Instead of generating a response to a story, she examined the ways in which children portray female characters in a student authored story. Participants were selected from the 1983-1986 winners of the Young Author's Contest. This is a state competition affiliated with the International Reading Association. Subjects in the study ranged in grade levels from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Writing samples were drawn from all writing genres including poetry, prose, fiction, and non fiction.

Characters in the stories were then analyzed, whether the characters were male or female, and were categorized by either physical appearance or personal ability. Finally, the number and types of roles stated by the subjects were determined. These roles were either family roles or occupational. Statistical significance was found for the number of male as to female characters referenced in the writing sample. A 1 to 5 ratio was found. Of the 144 characters in stories, 120 or 83% were male and 24 characters or 16% were female. Male authors used male characters and female authors used female characters.

It was also found that there was statistical significance for the attributes assigned to male and female characters. Female authors were much more descriptive in discussing their characters than were male authors. Perhaps this is indicative of the gender differences in responses discussed earlier. Female authors may focus on the aesthetic elements of a story, while males focus on the efferent aspects.

Through seventh grade, authors assigned males and female characters to more family roles such as parents and care takers. In grades 4-7, male authors assigned all female characters to family roles, while 70% of the roles assigned to male characters were occupational. By high school, male and female authors were increasing their attention to the roles they gave males. More high school students assigned males to occupational roles and assigned very few roles at all to female characters.

Females were given roles such as witches, nurses, social workers, secretaries, and ballet dancers. Male characters were given roles such as micro biologist, doctor, boss, and governor. It can clearly be seen that stereotypes were extremely prevalent in the writing of children. Many says, "While females are involved in a wide variety of roles in society, the findings revealed a scarcity of occupational roles assigned to female characters in children's writing and the range of roles was alarmingly narrow and stereotypical" (p. 368). All characters were placed in traditional circumstances.

This research shows the importance of female characters. It also indicates that more literature with female characters in positive roles needs to be incorporated into classrooms. By doing this, the chances of females making aesthetic transactions with a text will increase.

Anderson and Many (1992) conducted a study involving an analysis of children's responses to storybook characters in non traditional roles. In this study, Anderson and Many employed the use of transactional theory. They believe, "In using a reader-response perspective with non traditional literature, children are allowed to construct their own views of the world suggested by the text and respond accordingly" (p. 96). The subjects for this study were 67 males and 87 females (154 students in all), ranging in age from eight to ten. All students attended third grade at one elementary school.

They examined children's responses to two different books which portrayed male and female characters in non traditional roles. The first was William's Doll in which a young boy wants a doll. His grandmother finally buys the doll and convinces everyone else that it's okay for William to want a doll. The second story was White Dynamite and Curly Kidd. This is the story of a girl who wants to be a bull rider when she grows up. The reader does not know until the last page that Lucky Kidd, the main character, is female.

Each story was read aloud by the researcher. Students were then asked to write a written response to the story. They were asked to respond to the following prompt: "Write anything you want about the story I just read." The same procedure was done for both stories. The order of the stories was counter balanced in the classrooms to avoid possible influences of all students hearing the same story at the same time.

Data was then analyzed to determine the reaction to the non traditional role in the story. These were analyzed for both positive and negative affects. If students did not respond to the role of the characters, responses were classified as either descriptive/evaluative or connecting. Therefore, a response could fall into one of four categories. These were: 1) Negative, 2) Positive, 3) Descriptive/Evaluative, and 4) Connecting. The premise of these

categories was aesthetic, but descriptive did incorporate the efferent stance to some degree.

Using Chi Square analysis, responses were examined. When looking at male main characters, the largest number of responses by both males and females was in the descriptive/evaluative category. Over 50% of male and female responses fell in this category. Females tended to respond more positive to males in non traditional roles. 26% of female responses were positive, while only 8% of males responded positively to males in non traditional roles. A small percentages of responses were of the connecting category. This indicates that those students made personal connections with the story. Students focused on the parts of the story that were important to them.

The researchers also examined responses to female main characters in non traditional roles. No significant differences were found between male and female students. Only 23% of the total responses reacted to the non traditional role of the female main character. Those who responded negatively questioned the fact that a girl would want to be a bull rider. The largest category of responses came from the descriptive/evaluative category. A total of 65% of responses fell within this category.

These results are extremely interesting. Many and Anderson contend that students are not busy paying attention to the roles of the characters, instead, they are busy responding like they would to any piece of literature. They note the importance of some students to make connecting type responses. Many and Anderson indicate that students are making the types of "life to text connections encouraged by many reader response proponents." They concluded that answers in the connecting category help to support the notion of gender schema by using criteria other than gender when making decisions about behavior.

Anderson and Many state that, "In summary, the findings from this study suggest that when students are asked to write a free response to a story containing a main character in a non traditional role, they may not react to that aspect of the story" (p. 103). Instead, they maintain that the responders relate the story to their lives or comment on events in the story. Finally, Anderson and Many state that teachers need to put control in the children's minds to decide what is personally relevant with respect to the appropriateness of male, female, traditional, or non traditional roles. By doing this, students will be empowered to reflect and think about the personal rightness or wrongness of what they have just read.

In this section of the review of literature, the text factor of female main characters was examined. It was shown that the characters are a driving force in literature. Characters have the power to change or perpetuate stereotypes and attitudes. Characters can also determine whether an aesthetic transaction will be created with the text. The main

characters in stories have tremendous power and influence over the reader. Characters are an extremely important text factor that always needs to be considered when selecting literature to use with children.

Combination of Reading Factors

The research on reader stance, gender, and female characters helps to create a more complete view of what occurs within a reader to affect the stance assumed towards a piece of literature. It also becomes somewhat more dissected. This section of the literature review is more focused on how stance, gender, genre preference, and character preference condition and affect the stance towards a literary work. This research is broken into three main areas. The first examines gender preference for literary genre. The second area of research focuses on gender and main character preference. Do males and females prefer male or female characters? Also, does the fact that characters may be portrayed in traditional or non traditional roles affect preference. Finally, a research article helps to tie together all of the previous literature. It focused exclusively on transactional theory and the impact of literature on responses given by males and females to characters who are Anglo and African American.

Reading preference can have a great impact on the types of transaction that is created with a text. This preference will also determine if an aesthetic or efferent stance is taken to the reading event. Rosenblatt (1983, 1994) supports the importance of preference when reading. She believes that one's reading preference will determine the amount of satisfaction gained from the reading event. "The reader seeks in literature a great variety of satisfactions. These sometimes quite conscious demands are in themselves important factors affecting the interrelation between book and reader" (1983, p.35). Rosenblatt also states that literature provides readers with three opportunities. These are: 1) as an emotional outlet, 2) a chance to enjoy the beauty or grandeur of nature and the splendor of far off places, and 3) an opportunity to experience things that would be impossible or unwise for a reader to experience. In other words, the love of action, the love of adventure, or social release may be experienced through literature. It could be that a reader's preferences are based on one or more of these reasons. Therefore, gender preferences for books may indicate the need to satisfy some of these desires.

In addition, Rosenblatt (1983) states that the prime purpose for reading is still for enjoyment and entertainment. She believes that books read for these purposes can have the most impact into influencing the reader's behavior and personality. Rosenblatt writes:

The power of literature to offer entertainment and recreation is,

despite the pendants and moralist, still its prime reason for survival. Books read solely for entertainment satisfy, after all, definite needs and answer definite preoccupations. Such works have therefore a potential capacity to influence the reader's personality and behavior, perhaps even more than those he may read in the course of the school routine. (p. 183-184)

It is often the preferences that a reader has that helps to quench this desire for entertainment. Any given reader is more likely to read a book within his book preference type than books which are not. Like written responses, males and females have differing preferences for genre. Martinez and Roser (1991) state that literature points out that in general, all elementary age students prefer adventure, fairy tales, humor, biography, true event stories, and animal stories. They say, "Although interest cannot be equated with response, these findings do suggest some broad areas that might guide initial research on the influence of text on children's responses to literature" (1991, p. 650).

Chiu (1973) conducted a study of reading preferences for fourth grade students. Chiu wanted to examine gender differences as well as differences in preference by students of various ability. Despite the age of her study, her work set a precedence for reading preference and is quite often cited in reviews of literature. Ninety nine fourth graders, 53 males and 46 females, were used in the study. All students were Caucasian and came from working or middle class families. After obtaining the sample, the students were given a questionnaire to assess reading preferences. The same questionnaire was given one month later. The method of paired comparisons was employed to study reading preferences for ten categories. These ten categories of books were: 1) Adventure, 2) Animal Stories, 3) Biography, 4) Fantasy, 5) Humor, 6) Mystery, 7) Poetry, 7) Science, 9) Social Studies, and 10) Sports. Following each category, a description of each book type was given. There were forty five items on the questionnaire. Questions were forced match items, such as "Would you rather read- a book that is funny- or a book that is a mystery story?"

Data was analyzed using reliability coefficients for the test- retest method. Comparisons were made for the means of the ten categories for males and females using two-tailed t- tests. In general, males preferred to read about biography, science, social studies, and sports. Females preferred to read about adventure, fantasy, humor, and poetry. There were no gender differences for animal stories or mystery. Males placed sports as the highest level of preference, while females placed the highest preference on mystery. Interestingly, both males and females rated mystery quite high, indicating that both genders prefer reading this genre. High and low ability students had the same reading

preferences.

With regards to the efferent and aesthetic stances, females were choosing genres which help them assume an aesthetic stance. Males tended to focus on genres that will take an efferent stance. This is found partly by the preference of males to enjoy biography. The results indicate that males and females have definite preferences that will affect the stance towards a piece of literature.

Fisher (1988) examined reading preferences for third, fourth, and fifth grade students. His study examined whether gender, grade, and race affected reading preference. The sample for this study consisted of 207 third, fourth, and fifth grade students. Children were placed in three clusters which balanced grade, gender, and race. Fisher administered the reading preference survey developed by Bundy (1982) to each cluster. This survey used forty four fictitious book titles and a book description for each. Eleven categories of books were used. These were: 1) History, 2) Biography, 3) Science, 4) Crafts, 5) Sports, 6) Mystery, 7) Jokes, 8) Fairy Tales, 9) Adventure, and 11) Poetry. Students marked their preference for reading each fictitious book and title by marking a four point Likert scale. These ranged from "dislike very much" to "like very much."

Results indicated a significant main effect for gender and grade level. With regards to grade, biography, fairy tales, and animal stories showed the biggest contribution to differences. Across all three grades a preference for fairy tales declined as grade increased. Racial differences also existed in preference of literature. African American children showed a stronger preference for sports books and biographies, while Caucasian children showed a stronger preference for mystery and adventure.

When looking at gender differences, book preference varied for all categories except for mystery and adventure. This finding for mystery is consistent with the results of Chiu (1973). Males preferred history, science, and sports stories. Females preferred biography, crafts, jokes, fairy tales, and animal stories. Some of these findings support the work of Chiu (1973), but some findings are varied. In Chiu's study, biography was preferred by males, and animal stories were preferred by neither gender. It could be that the time span between the studies accounts for some of these differences. Perhaps, over the years, emphasis has been placed on reducing the many gender gaps that exist for males and females. Maybe teachers are exposing all children to all literature types in order for each student to act on what the individual child believes is his or her reading preference. If a similar study were conducted in 1996, gender differences may become even smaller.

Not only can literary genre affect the stance assumed in response to literature, but so

can main character preference. If a reader has a preference for either male or female characters, this will have an impact on the type of transaction and stance made towards that book. As discussed earlier, the portrayal of the female characters and whether or not the characters were evoked can greatly impact and ultimately create an aesthetic transaction.

Rosenblatt (1983) believes that in order for the aesthetic stance to be assumed by the reader, bonds must be formed to the characters. This can be accomplished in two ways. First, by sharing similar experiences with the characters, a natural bond to the reader's own life is formed. Second, aesthetic bonds can be formed when the reader sees the characters qualities as either similar or different from his or her own qualities. Whether or not this aesthetic bond is formed can be affected by female characters in traditional or non traditional role. If an aesthetic transaction has occurred, then a preferences for those characters has been formed.

The reader and text work together to help form the preference for characters in traditional or non traditional roles. Probst (1988) cites a 1983 study by Mauro. In this study, Mauro found that expectations of text can greatly affect the transactions made with a text, and thus the stance. Mauro goes on to state that students are busy looking for vivid characters when reading. The text expectations for the female characters and the search for vivid characters fulfilling these expectations may not always coincide, leading to the very different types of stances, efferent or aesthetic. The main characters are the most vivid connections to the story. The connections made to the characters are central. For females, this will be connections to female characters and for males, connections to male characters.

Research has examined how the portrayal of characters influences children's character preference and stance assumed towards a work. Frasher and Frasher (1979) examined the difference in preference for main characters, both male and female, in traditional and non traditional roles. They used 387 fifth and sixth grade students for this study. There were 218 females and 169 males.

They examined male and female characters in traditional, as well as non traditional roles. Four stories from selected texts were chosen for the study. The first story contained a "tomboy" girl character who decides to become more lady like. The second story contained a female main character who stands up to the town bully and wins a contest against the bully. The third story featured a male main character in a traditional role. A boy moves to the city and learns to cope with life in a new city. He must prove himself in a physical confrontation with a gang. The fourth story contained a male main character

who is first portrayed as a troublemaker and bully. The story then focuses on his role as a caretaker to an injured bird. In the process, he becomes more sensitive and leaves his trouble making ways.

Participants in the study read either two or four of the stories. Immediately after reading the selections, they answered questions over the story, then wrote a response to it. In this response, they had to respond to the issue of story preference and identification with the characters.

T-tests were used to correlate groups responses to traditional and non traditional stories. Results were also compared for students who read either two or four stories. It was found that females preferred stories with female main characters and preferred the nontraditional male stories over the traditional story. Males preferred stories with male characters and the traditional male story over the non traditional one. Character preference was similar. Females liked reading about female main characters and males liked reading about male main characters.

With regard to identification with story characters, females identified with female characters, and males identified with male main characters. Females who did show a preference for male characters preferred them in non traditional roles and behavior. Females also preferred to read about characters in non traditional roles, which indicates a desire to free themselves from the gender constraints placed on them. It can be deduced that identifying with the character will lead to aesthetic transactions with the story.

Johnson, Peer, and Baldwin (1984) examined protagonist preferences of fourth through tenth grade students. Fifty five school districts in 20 states and the District of Columbia participated. The total number of participants was 4,863 (males = 2,497 and females = 2,366). The sample covered all regions and included rural, urban, and suburban districts.

To assess preference for the various characteristics of the protagonist, a self reported interest and attitude survey was used. Bookmatch, a computer based system that recommends books based on reader preferences and traits was also employed in this study. Subjects were encouraged to provide the computer program with accurate information since participants actually received individual computer recommendations. As part of the survey, students received stimulus questions for age and gender. Using a Likert scale, students responded to how important age and gender of the main character was. These surveys were then machine scored. Next, a frequency distribution of responses was obtained, and finally, responses were prepared in order that a correlational analysis could

be done. A Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient (Rho) was computed.

The results obtained are somewhat surprising. First, for male students, the importance of a male protagonist decreased as grade increased. In other words, for fourth grade students, a male protagonist was much more important than for students in tenth grade. As male students increased in grades from 4 to 10, the female protagonist became increasingly more important.

For female students, the importance of the male protagonist increased as the age of the student did. Tenth grade females felt the presence of a male protagonist was more important than did fourth grade females. The importance of the female protagonist for females did not show a tendency to increase or decrease with age.

In their study, Johnson et al. also examined if the age of the protagonist was an important factor for the reader. The age of the protagonist was found to be significant. Grade level was not affected by this fact. Fourth grade students preferred reading about nine and ten year olds, while tenth grade students preferred to read about 14 to 16 year olds. It was found that students did not like to read about protagonists younger than themselves. This increased as the age of the reader did. Interestingly, females were not found to be as sensitive to the age of the character as were males.

In summation of their study, Johnson et al. state that "The reasons individual children choose the books they read will always be unique" (p. 150). This takes into account Rosenblatt's notion that each reader brings very different knowledge to any reading transaction. Perhaps, this can be extended to explain why readers choose the books they do. Maybe, previous transactions and experiences with books explains why readers possess their given reading preference. It is this "uniqueness" Johnson et al. mention, that can be used to explain the very nature of the aesthetic stance and response to literature.

Bleakley, Westerberg, and Hopkins (1988) examined the effects of main character preference. In their study, 30 fifth graders from fifteen schools were asked to participate. Three literary genres, adventure, mystery, and humor were used in the study. A total of nine stories were selected. Students then read the stories and a measurement of reading interest was given. There were eight questions with several options for each question.

Raw scores on the instrument were then converted from t-scores to standardize the means and variance. Bleakley et al. found a gender of main character and gender of reader connection. Males preferred to read books with male main characters, while females preferred to read books with female main characters. Males also rated stories less interesting which contained female characters. Females found stories with male

protagonists less interesting. The preference of the females was much less pronounced than that of the males. For males and females, mystery stories were found to be the most interesting type of genre. This supports the earlier stated findings of Chiu (1973) and Fisher (1988). Bleakley et al. state that "The greater tolerance of girls for stories in which the main character is male may be a function of social adaptation and adjustment to the world of stories, which seems to be dominated by male main characters" (p. 153).

Lowther and Sullivan (1993) also examined reading preference with regards to ethnicity and gender of the main character. They took main character preference a step further and examined preferences of Anglo and Native American students. 120 children (60 Anglo and 60 American Indian) in grades two and three participated in this study. Eighteen black and white illustrations adapted from other preference studies were used for this study. The illustrations were organized into three categories: 1) ethnicity of main character, 2) gender of main character, and 3) story setting. Once these categorizations were assigned, various combinations of these traits resulted in three pairs of pictures for ethnicity, gender, and story setting.

Each subject was interviewed individually by one of two trained raters. Subjects were then asked to respond to the following scenario. "I have a friend who writes stories for children just like you. My friend wants to write a story about these pictures but doesn't know which ones you would most like to read about. Look carefully at these two pictures and tell me which one you would rather read about." Responses were then recorded on prepared forms. The proportion of times that each illustration type was chosen over the others was recorded for ethnicity and gender. Three chi-squares were then used to analyze the contrasts.

Results indicated that Anglo and American Indian children both preferred covers where an Anglo and American Indian child were depicted. This preference for ethnic covers with both ethnicities was preferred over pictures that had just Anglo or American Indian children. American Indian children also chose same ethnicity character 81% of the time, while Anglo children chose same ethnicity only 25% of the time. This indicates that American Indian children have a higher preference for book covers with characters from the same ethnicity.

The results for gender preference in reading were similar to Bleakley et al. (1988). Lowther and Sullivan also found that males preferred reading a book with at least one male character over books with two female characters. Females preferred to read stories about two males instead of a story about a male and a female. This finding supports the notion

of Bleakley et al. that females have a stronger tolerance for male characters than males have for female characters.

Ethnic break downs for main character preference is interesting. American Indians chose the same gender for main characters 97% of the time. Anglos chose the same gender 95% of the time. The findings for preference of main characters is somewhat surprising. Given the notion that males and females prefer same gender characters, it is surprising that females did not prefer stories with two female characters. Lowther and Sullivan account for some of these differences in main character preference by saying,

This difference could possibly be attributed to boys not being interested in reading about girls themselves. The girls, however, might think that reading a story with two boys would be more adventuresome than a story with both a boy and a girl (p. 7).

While the research results and findings are significant with regards to gender and ethnicity, the validity of the last part of their statement is somewhat questionable.

When examining research that combines reader stance, gender, and characters factors, it becomes virtually non-existent. This, despite the fact that Probst (1988) and Martinez and Roser (1988) acknowledge that all three areas are tied together and help condition each other. It appears that there is little empirical evidence to support this belief. Only a single study could be located to examine the interaction of all three of these factors in the review of literature. Tavenner (1993) examined reader response entries of fourth grade African American and European American students employing the transactional theory. Elementary students were asked to examine the covers of eight books. Four front covers depicted African American characters, while the other four covers depicted European American characters. Half of the protagonists appeared to be male and the other half female.

Students then chose the four books they would most like to read or have the researcher read to them. Students recorded their choices and wrote comments as to why they chose the books they did. A 2 x 2 x 2 ANOVA was used to answer the following two questions: 1) Will exposure to the perceived ethnicity of characters depicted on the cover of the book influence fourth grade children's initial book preference? 2) Will transaction with the text be related to change in the fourth grade children's initial book preference.

Significant effects were found for gender and ethnicity. Females selected more African American books than males. African American children selected more African American books than European books. Initial book preferences were the same for both groups of

children. Tavenner states that results for question two are equivocal.

Tavenner then examined the written comments fourth graders wrote as to why they chose the four books they did. She placed these into five categories: 1) Curious/Inquisitive, 2) Prediction/Transaction, 3) Previous/No Previous Exposure, 4) Attractive Format, and 5) Personal Identification. To assure reliability of categorization, a second rater scored a sampling of the responses. African American females predominately reported "attractive format" as the reason for choosing a book. African American males predominately reported "personal identification" reasons for choosing books. These males felt the books reminded them of some past personal experience. Finally, European males and females both reported "curious/interested" reasons for choosing books.

After the children heard all eight stories read aloud, they were again asked to choose four and write a response as to why they choose them. This time three categories were identified. These were: 1) Personal Identification, 2) General Evaluative Statements, and 3) Specific Evaluative Statements. Again another rater looked at a sampling of responses. Here, there were no significant differences for gender or ethnicity. All students chose books because they could either personalize with the book, judged the book, or found some aspect of the book to be valuable. Tavenner did find that generally females tended to be more concerned with the characters of the story, whereas males were more interested in the topic or message of the story. This follows much of the earlier mentioned studies about gender differences in responses to literature.

Finally, an interview form was filled out for each of the eight books. This interview addressed who would like to read which of the eight books the best. In general, most of the children felt that both boys and girls would enjoy all eight of the books. A larger percent of African American children, especially females, felt that both genders would like the books. Finally, females in the majority of the cases liked and would recommend any of the eight selections.

Two more research questions were examined in this study. These were 3) As children transact with literature about characters perceived as either African American or European American, will their perceived ethnicity affect student's immediate aesthetic or efferent responses? and 4) As children transact with literature about characters perceived as either African American or European American, will their gender affect students' immediate aesthetic or efferent responses? To assess this, students wrote responses in literature response journals. The students were given two prompts that addressed important facts or events remembered from the story and what important feelings, thoughts or ideas came to

mind when reading the story.

A four factor analysis of variance was used to analyze the mean number of words for each type of response. A main effect for response type was found. Subjects wrote more efferently ($X = 21.6$) than aesthetically ($X = 15.7$). The number of African American students using efferent responses was significantly higher, $X = 28.5$, while for European Americans the mean was 14.6. Aesthetic responses were virtually the same. This shows that African Americans respond more efferently than aesthetically, while European Americans responded similarly efferently and aesthetically. With regards to gender, aesthetic and efferent responses did differ. Females were generally able to write longer aesthetic responses.

To also analyze efferent and aesthetic responses, Tavenner looked at 96 response literature logs and categorized the responses into five categories of aesthetic responses. These were: 1) Personalizing/Identifying with, 2) Feelings/Emotions, 3) General Evaluative Statements, 4) Specific Evaluative Statements, and 5) Elaborating Beyond Story. This analysis indicated that all subjects responded aesthetically to books. Females most often personalized with groups other than their own ethnicity and gender. Tavenner did find that African American females were consistently drawing parallels between the text and their lives.

All of these results indicate that after fourth grade students interact with a text, book preference changes. After transacting with a text, students were able to choose books representing and not representing their own ethnicity. Students were able to "broaden their horizons" to speak about the literature they preferred and would recommend. Gender did have some affect on the stance assumed by readers. Generally, females gave longer aesthetic responses and were able to personalize the stories more. The amount of transacting with the text did not appear to be affected by either ethnicity or gender.

This was the only study that could be found to tie all three of the bodies of research together. Perhaps the 1993 date of this study helps to explain why. Maybe, research is now beginning to examine gender and stance. It is the contention of the researcher, that little or no empirical reports have looked at these three areas of research together. Perhaps, now is the time for this to be done. If more studies similar to Tavenner's are done, then more empirical research will become available. A 1993 date is indicative of the fact that, perchance, a new field of research has been opened up to researchers.

Conclusion

Only in the last 10 to 15 years has research in children's responses to literature become

a focal point of study (Martinez and Roser, 1991). One area of focus is on studying the efferent and aesthetic stances to literature. This is what was attempted in this literature review and research study. Research has been synthesized to help form a more complete picture of male and female responses to literature.

This review of literature has examined the efferent and aesthetic stances as stated in the transactional theory of reading as espoused by Louise Rosenblatt. One key element to transactional theory is the concept of reader stance. These stances, efferent and aesthetic, can help to determine how a story is ultimately read and understood. The notion of stance also determines what kind of relationship the reader forms with the text.

The literature review has shown how age, gender, and the portrayal of female characters can affect the reader's stance. It was also established that all children, in general, show a tendency to respond with an aesthetic stance. It must be noted that fourth grade students were found to have a higher rate of efferent responses than were older students. Research did find that preference for the aesthetic stance increases as does the age of the students. Females were more likely than males to use an aesthetic stance, while males were more likely to use an efferent stance. Therefore, fourth grade males may have an even higher tendency to respond efferently.

There is also a body of research which helps to complete an even more specific and clear picture of the child respondent. This includes such things as genre preferences and main character preferences. These help to show what sort of things can affect the stance assumed towards a piece of literature. It is by understanding why children chose the books and stories they do, that researchers will gain greater insight into why children assume the efferent or aesthetic stance.

It is the hope of the researcher to fill a gap in the research on efferent and aesthetic reading. This gap involves exploring reader stance, gender, and female main characters in literature. To undertake such research employs the very nature from which reader stance originates. A characteristic of the reader (gender) and of the text (character) are examined together. The very premise of Rosenblatt's theory entails an interaction between the reader and the text.

By further exploring and understanding the efferent and aesthetic stances to literature, one can better understand how a reader is approaching, understanding, and relating to a story. It is by researching Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic stances that educators and others who work with children will understand the connections children are making with literature. The idea that students can approach literature in two distinct ways is a relatively

new idea. Since the 1930's, when Rosenblatt first began exploring the efferent and aesthetic stances, a new way of thinking about responses to literature was born. It is also the hope of the researcher to keep Rosenblatt's ideas as a vital philosophy among teacher and researchers. By keeping Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic reading stances at the forefront of teaching and research, all involved will benefit, especially those who matter most, the students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research questions in this study centered around students' written responses to literature. The null hypothesis stated that there would be no difference in responses by males and females. The research hypothesis, however, stated that there would be a difference in the responses given by males and females with regard to the stance assumed in written responses to literature.

The specific research questions were:

1. Do efferent and aesthetic responses to literature with female main characters differ between males and females?
2. Do personal levels of understanding of literature with female main characters differ between males and females?

It is with these questions in mind that the methodology, assessment tools, and statistical evaluations were designed.

Subjects

The subjects for this study came from a suburban community in the midwest. Forty-three fourth grade students attending a neighborhood school were used in this study. Two fourth grade classrooms from the school were used for the research. A cluster type sample was used in that classrooms were selected as units instead of individual students.

Of the forty three subjects, ethnicity falls into the following categories: 16% of subjects come from ethnic backgrounds such as, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian, while the remaining 84% of subjects were Caucasian. Ethnicity is coded by parents on enrollment forms at the beginning of each school year. There were eighteen males and twenty six females in the study.

Socio Economic Status was based on the qualification for receiving free or reduced lunches. The forty three subjects in this study did come from varying economic backgrounds: 20% of students come from a low Socio Economic status, while 80% did not.

Materials for Research Study

A list of nine books was compiled by the researcher taking into account several factors. These included selecting books that were on the third and fourth grade district literature lists, as well as books that children may not have had previous contact. A

previous exposure could hamper the responses given by subjects. The researcher also wanted to make sure that quality literature was used in the study. Exposure to good literature should also be the aim of any reading or literature program. Three experts in the field of Children's Literature chose three books from the list of nine. The list experts were given contained the title and author of the book, publishing information, as well as a brief description about the book. Experts rating books were also able to add a title to the list of their three choices if they felt another choice would be better. The books listed each had main characters that are dominate and strong. Each of these characters also places herself in somewhat non traditional roles and acts in ways not typically associated with women during certain times in history. The list that resulted was: 1) Julie of the Wolves by Jean George, 2) Sarah, Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLaughlin, and 3) Anastasia Krupnik Lois Lowry. Due to a conflict of usage in the other research room, Addie Across the Prairie by Laurie Lawlor was substituted since this text was also on the original list and is about life on the prairie. (See appendix A for complete letter and literature list given to experts.)

The second material used in this study were the responses written by subjects. Subjects were given one sheet of wide notebook paper to write written responses on after hearing each of the three books. Each set of responses to the three books were coded by gender, not name. Paper handed to females contained a green check mark in the top corner of the paper. Paper handed to males had a yellow check mark in the upper right hand corner of the paper. Subjects also wrote the name of the book he or she was writing about at the top of the paper. They were not assigned a certain length for the response, but were encouraged to write a response of at least half a page. This was done so that responses were long enough, both in length and depth, to score. Having longer responses allowed for more breadth and depth of responses. This was done for each of the three stories. A total of 127 responses were generated. There were forty nine responses for males and seventy eight for females.

Treatment Condition

In this study, the treatment condition was the manipulation of books with dominate female characters. Subjects were read aloud three books with female characters. The researcher chose to use dominate female characters because of the changing roles of female characters in literature. It has been shown (D'Angelo, 1989; Many, 1989b; Many and Anderson, 1992; Schweickart, 1986) that inequalities exist in females being portrayed in positive, non traditional roles. In this study, gender was an independent variable, while responses to stories was the dependent variable.

Assessment

The assessment tools used in this study evaluated reader response entries using the Instrument for Measuring Reader Stance on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum (Cox and Many 1992b; Many, 1989a; Many, 1991). This classification system is divided into two areas. The first is the classification of stance from efferent to aesthetic. A five point continuum emerged with responses rated as 1 indicating the most efferent stance. Responses rated as a 5 indicated the most aesthetic stance. Responses can fall at any point of the continuum. The resulting continuum is shown in Figure 1.

Each of the five points on this continuum will be summarized. A rank of 1 on the scale indicates the most efferent response which focused solely on what was learned or information gained from the reading. A rank of 2 on the scale indicates an answer that is primarily efferent. Responses of this type focus on the story line by recounting the narrative. Specifically, Cox and Many state that responses of this nature focus on simple retelling or retelling with preference of judgment statements. A rank of 3 indicates an answer that has elements of both an efferent and aesthetic evocation or stance. No primary emphasis was given to efferent or aesthetic elements in the written response. A rank 4 response is primarily aesthetic in nature. Selective attention is given to specific parts of the story. Readers selective attention is given to the story world and a possible relating of the story which drew their attention. This selective attention may include a statement of preference, a judgment of the quality of the story or of characters' behavior, or an impression about the people or events in the story.

Finally, a rank 5 response is the most aesthetic response type. Responses here have clear evidence of the lived through experience. In these types of responses, attention is centered on ideas, scenes, images, association, or feelings called to mind during the reader's transactions with the text. Responses in this category may also contain 1) a focus on imaging, or 2) picturing, relating associations or feelings evoked, and or 3) hypothesizing, extending and retrospecting.

Cox and Many (1992b) then developed the second data-driven classification system. This continuum discusses personal levels of understanding. To develop this classification system, they cite the work of two reader response theorists. They cite Ricouer (1976) and his interpretation theory, as well as Applebee's (1978) levels of meaning. These two theories were used together to create the scale. It was designed to characterize an individual's creation of the story in addition to the interpretation of a personally meaningful literary experience. Finally, it was also designed to view the degree to which personal

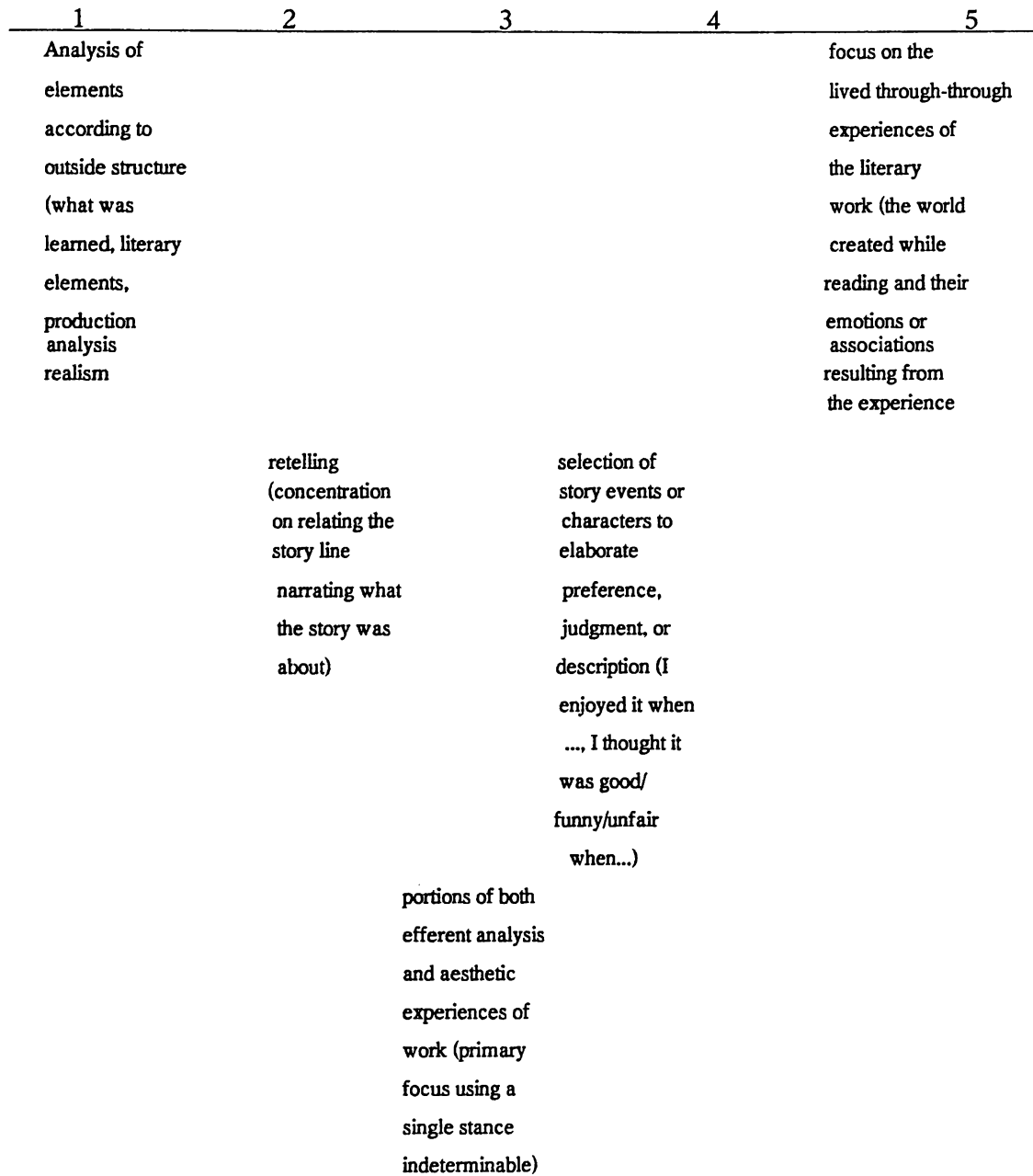
Figure 1. Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum

Figure 1. Represents the five categories of responses on which an answer can fall. This continuum indicates the range from most efferent to most aesthetic responses.

understanding breaks through the boundaries of the text and is applied to real life. The resulting continuum is shown in Figure 2.

A level 1 response indicates that the reader does not go beyond the literal meaning of the story. Answers may include feelings about the story, preferences, or judgments, but no interpretation beyond the simplest literal level. A level 2 response indicates some interpretation of story events. At this level readers often made judgments about, inferences, or explanations about a character's behavior based on the character's literal actions. A level 3 response demonstrates understanding of specific story events through analogy to self or world. Here, readers were able to go beyond the confines of the text by placing themselves in situations from the story. Readers may have related to the characters in the story or shown how situations in the story may be in real life. Finally, a level 4 response reaches a generalized belief or understanding about life. Personal meaning is much more global and applicable to the world rather than being confined to the situations in the story. Responders may have also made comments about possible worlds they think exist based on their encounter with the story. They may also discuss the lesson learned or the moral of the story.

Written responses were coded on both of these continuums to fully assess the type of response given by subjects. Research (Cox and Many, 1992b; Many, 1989a, 1990, 1991) has found that higher levels of personal understanding are associated with more aesthetic responses. Therefore, both scores were figured for subjects to ascertain if this was indeed true.

Procedures

This study took nine weeks to complete. The study took place in January and February, 1996. This time frame was chosen because it would allow for relatively uninterrupted research and testing time. Approximately three weeks were allotted for each literature selection. There has been documented time totals in similar studies (Many, 1989a, 1991, 1992; Many and Anderson, 1992). These four studies employed transactional theory, therefore, the researcher felt that this was a proven and tested time frame. Specifically, eleven days were allotted for each selection, Anastasia Krupnik and Addie Across the Prairie. One chapter was read each day. Fourteen days were allotted for Julie of the Wolves. This book was longer and did not contain chapters. The researcher broke down the book into segments that would be appropriate for read aloud sessions.

Parent permission was first obtained for all participants (see appendix B for permission letter). In the classrooms, the two teachers spent two to three weeks on each selection.

Figure 2. Continuum for Personal Levels of Understanding

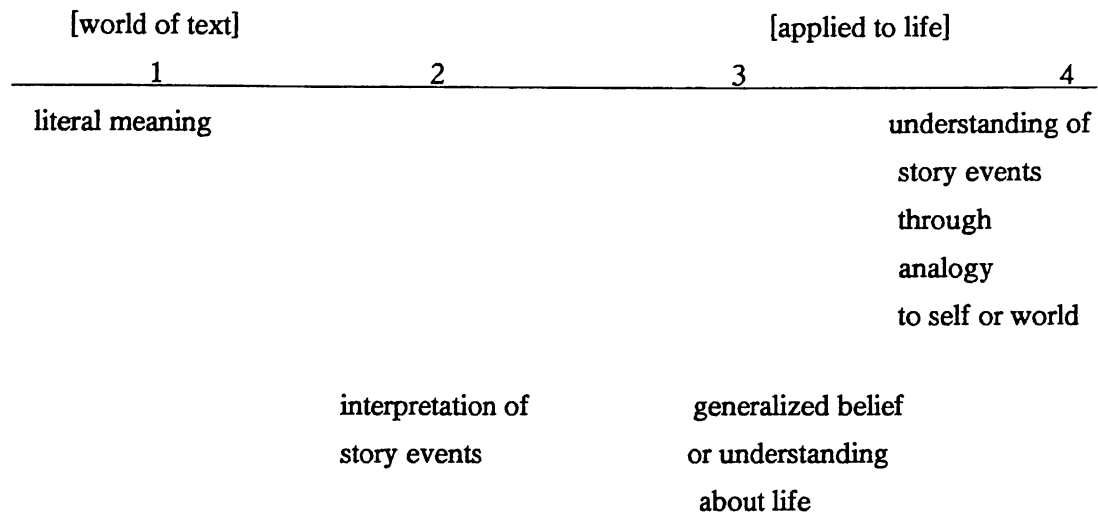


Figure 2. Represents the range of understanding obtained by readers. The continuum ranges from responses staying within the confines of the text to responses which apply the story to life situations.

The story was read to the class each day during teacher read aloud time. Approximately 10 -20 minutes was spent each day reading to the children. This was a normal part of the school day for all classrooms in the school. The read aloud method was selected for several reasons. First, this is a normal part of the school day. Therefore, fewer interruptions would occur and a more natural testing and assessment environment would result. Second, it was felt that reading ability would not be a variable to be encountered (Galda, 1990, 1992; Yocum, 1993; Many and Anderson, 1992; Nissel, 1987; Zarillo, 1991). All students would have an equal chance to listen and respond without worrying about being able to read the book. Third, the goal of any reading program should be to expose children to good literature. Reading aloud exposes children to literature they normally might not read (Evan's, 1992; Galda, 1990). Fourth, teachers are able to read more complicated stories to students (Many and Anderson, 1992). The listening comprehension level for students is two grade levels above that of a child's reading comprehension (Trelease, 1995). Fifth, previous research with the continuums also employed a read aloud method of research gathering. Finally, Yokum (1993) found that written responses to read alouds contained the following categories of responses; 1) literary linkage, 2) explanations, 3) characters, 4) relating to their world, and 5) illustrations. These are the type of answers the researcher will likely encounter in her results.

After each literature selection was read to the class, written responses were obtained. It is important to note that as the book was read, subjects often stopped to ask the teacher questions about the book, make predictions, and discuss their likes and dislikes of the story. This was done when the subjects were unclear about what was happening or when they wanted to share something about which they had a strong opinion. The researcher and the cooperating teacher allowed this to happen because it happens with the other read alouds in the classroom and would create a more natural situation for the subjects.

Subjects did not respond in writing until the end of the book in order for them to have the knowledge, feelings, and attitudes that were assimilated throughout the book. Earlier researchers (Cox and Many, 1992b, Many, 1989a, 1991, 1992; Many and Anderson, 1992) looking at the stance readers assume also waited until the completion of the story for some of the same reasons. It was also the hope of the researcher that a more comprehensive answer would result. By waiting, the subjects had plenty of time to form personal relationships with the text and time to process all the events in the story.

At the end of each story, subjects were given the following prompt: "Write anything you want about the book I just finished" (Anderson and Many, 1992; Cox and Many,

1992b; Many, 1989a, 1991, 1992; Many and Anderson, 1992; Many and Wiseman, 1992). An open ended prompt was used so that subjects were not predisposed to giving a certain type of response, whether this predisposition would be efferently or aesthetically based. Subjects were given between 20 - 30 minutes to complete responses. Papers were not gathered until all class members were through responding. The teachers did not give subjects feedback or help with writing responses. Once again, the teacher may consciously or unconsciously, lead subjects to respond more aesthetically or efferently based on the feedback given. Responses would be more valid with no encouragement and would more accurately reflect subjects true responses.

This cycle was repeated for each of the three literature selections, as well as for each classroom. In the two classrooms, the same book was never read to both classes at the same time. The order of the books was manipulated to ensure that this did not happen. Making sure that both classes were not reading the same book at the same time helped to diminish one hindrance to ensuring validity. If subjects in the two classrooms discussed the books amongst themselves, the validity of individual responses could be in question.

Statistical Evaluation

Several statistical evaluations were used with regard to the Instrument for Measuring Reader Stance on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum, as well as the Continuum for Personal Levels of Understanding. Percentages were calculated for each of the five levels of stance on the continuum and the four levels of personal understanding. This was done with each of the three books. Throughout this study, the level of risk assumed or the statistical probability was set at .05.

The mean responses for male and females were also determined for each of the three books. This helped to determine if the mean responses for males and females was significant for either the efferent to aesthetic continuum or personal levels of understanding. An analysis of variance was also performed.

A correlation coefficient (Spearman Rho) was used to show a correlation between the stance and personal level of understanding assumed.

To assess any significant difference in scores between the three books, an analysis of variance was calculated. This helped to determine if the stances assumed in one book were similar to the stances assumed in the other two books.

Finally, inter rater reliability was established since two independent raters scored subjects' written responses on the two continuums. A Pearson Product Moment correlation was also used to measure inter rater reliability.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results and findings of this research focused on two questions. These research questions centered around the transactional theory of reading and were designed to determine whether subjects are relating and making connections to literature with female main characters. The central point to the research questions centered around the idea that one's gender affects the type of response given to female main characters. The research questions were:

- 1) Do efferent and aesthetic responses to literature with female main characters differ between males and females?
- 2) Do personal levels of understanding of literature with female main characters differ between males and females?

Inter-rater reliability, established between the researcher and an independent rater with expertise in transactional theory, using a Pearson product-moment correlation, was .88 on the holistic classification of reader stance and .85 on the rating of personal understanding.

For question 1, the following research findings were found.

Stance 1- Most efferent response: Clear evidence of efferent analysis. As shown in Table 1, 1.6%, (2), of the responses were written from the most efferent stance. The typical responses from the most efferent stance focused on what was learned or information gained from the reading experience. These two responses focused on the literal events of the story, displaying what they learned about Julie, the main character, without discussing any thoughts about the book. This is shown by a subject responding to Julie of the Wolves. The subject writes "Julie was a 12 year old divorcee. When she met Jello she loved him." The other response from this stance states that "Julie of the wolves was about a girl named Julie and she didn't like it when her mom called her that." These two responses focused on the literal events on the story and centered on what was learned from the story.

Stance 2- Primarily efferent responses: Focused on retelling. As shown in Table 1, 7.9%, (10), of the total responses were written at the primarily efferent stance. Responses focused on retelling the story line. Subjects were busy writing a summary of the story. This summary was given with the typical "book report" format. No regard was given to

involve any interpretation or personal thoughts and feelings associated with the book. A typical response can be found as a subject responded to Addie Across the Prairie.

I read Addie Across the Prairie. It's about a family that goes out to live in the country but winter's coming soon and they have to build a house soon. They run into some people who will help them a lot when they all leave. Addie and her brother watch a farm, a prairie fire comes and ruins everything in its path so they live in the same house for a while.

This subject is clearly focused on telling the events of the story without telling how he/she feels about them. The response below, also shows a retelling to Anastasia Krupnik.

Anastasia Krupnik is a little girl who writes things down in a little green notebook under different section like things I hate! Things I love and she has a wart on her little toe where the wart was and it was gone and she went to tell her mom and dad. They were sitting at the table crying because Anastasia's grandmother died.

Responses at Stance 2 often started out with indications that an efferent response was to follow. For example: " Addie Across the Prairie is about a girl from Iowa..." or "Anastasia is about a girl who..." This exemplifies the fact that a retelling is going to occur.

Stance 3- Elements of both the aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis. Responses representing the midpoint of the continuum made up 20.5%, (26), of the total responses. Such responses included portions of both an aesthetic evocation and an efferent analysis without a primary emphasis on either. Responses might contain a mixture of retelling (Stance 1-2) , as well as selective attention to specific parts of the story or an aesthetic emphasis on the lived through experience of the story (Stance 4-5). Responses were balanced and represented equal attention to both ends of the continuum. For example, a response to Julie of the Wolves stated:

I liked how she had to live in the wild better than in civilization. I thought it was sad that Amaroq killed Jello and then Amaroq got shot. Kapu gets shot but he survived and started to lead the pack of wolves which included the late Amaroq, Kapu, Silver, Nails, Sister, Zit, Zat, and Zing.

Another subject wrote:

My favorite part was when Anastasia lost her wart, her grandma dies, and the baby was born and it all happened at once and Anastasia called the baby Sam.

The following response shows how the subject retold the events of the story, while also telling his personal feelings and reactions to those events.

I like Anastasia. She has a good mind. She has a few friends but she has a lot of problems. She has a little notebook that lists what she likes and dislikes. Anastasia has to name a baby but her name was gonna be stupid and her grandma dies, and the baby was born, and it's name was Sam.

All these subjects were relaying the story events while also telling their feelings and thoughts about them.

Stance 4- Primarily aesthetic response. As Table 1 shows, the majority of responses, 59.8% (76), were written from the primarily aesthetic stance. These responses involved subjects' selective attention to specific characters or events in the story, relating their associated feelings and thoughts about the story, or judging the characters' actions or behaviors in the stories. Often, a particular event or character is singled out in the response and the response centers around this event or character. A subject wrote of Julie of the Wolves:

I liked the book better than some books. But the sad part was when Amaroq dies. I really didn't care that much about Jello, he dies because he deserves it. One thing I'd like to know is was the person that shot Amaroq and Kapugen? I was happy that Kapugen lived.

Another subject wrote the following about Anastasia Krupnik:

I truly did not like the book. One, the language is not great and two, I did not enjoy the main Character Anastasia. Her characteristics are not lovely, and I did not enjoy listening to them. For example: her "hate" list. I did not enjoy listening to this book.

The response below shows how the subject chose to focus on the character of Addie to guide his response.

I read the book Addie Across the Prairie. It was one of the most best books I've ever read [listened to]. My most favorite character was Addie because she can be brave and stand up to Indians and prairie fires.

Stance 5- Most aesthetic response: Clear evidence of the lived through experience. Table 1 shows that 10.2%, (13), responses came from the most aesthetic response. In these responses attention was centered on the ideas, scenes, images, feelings, and associations called to mind during the transaction between the reader and text. The aesthetic element centers the response and the efferent analysis becomes secondary. The subjects are busy focusing all their energy on living through the experiences of the story.

I thought it (Julie of the Wolves) was ok, but I mean we never really meet Julie's family. Personally I think that too many animals got killed like Jello, Amaroq.

Table 1

Percentage of Responses at Each Stance on the Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum

<u>Stance</u>	<u>Book</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	
1	4.8%	0%	0%	1.6%
2	2.4%	17.1%	4.5%	7.9%
3	16.7%	31.7%	13.6%	20.5%
4	66.7%	41.5%	70.5%	59.8%
5	9.5%	9.8%	11.4%	10.2%

Note. Book A- Julie of the Wolves, Book B - Addie Across the Prairie, Book C- Anastasia Krupnik

I think it's senseless to kill all these beautiful animals even if they were mean, they still have a reason to be on this earth, but the story was good anyway.

Another subject wrote:

I loved the book Anastasia Krupnik. It was a fun, funny book. Lois Lowry was her own "inward eye" of writing this great book. It doesn't seem fiction because at the end everything happened all at once and that's what usually happens in life.

These responses indicate that concern is being given to what the subjects were experiencing during and after listening to the books.

In response to gender, there was no difference found. To determine if stance was significantly different, an analysis of variance was calculated. Results indicated no significant difference, $F = .03$, $df 1, 121$, $p > .05$.

The mean responses by gender for each of the three books is shown in Table 2. Overall, the mean female response over all three books was 3.7, while the male mean response for all three selections was 3.68. All responders used between a stance 3 and 4 when responding. By looking at Table 2, it can be seen that female mean responses, 3.96, were higher for Anastasia Krupnik, while male mean responses, 3.81, were highest for Julie of the Wolves. For both males and females, the lowest mean response was on the literature selection Addie Across the Prairie at 3.44.

To answer question 2, Do personal levels of understanding of literature with female main characters differ between males and females?, the percentages of responses at each of the four levels was calculated. This continuum helped analyze the personal level of understanding reached by the subject in view of the degree to which understanding breaks through the confines of the text and is applied to life.

Level 1- Does not go beyond literal meaning of the story. As shown in Table 3, 22%, (28), of the total responses did not show evidence of reaching personal understanding beyond that of the printed text. These responses may have included feelings about the story or judgments, but did not interpret these feelings beyond the text. In the following efferent response the lowest level of understanding is indicated:

The book Julie of the Wolves is about a girl who wants to go to San Francisco and on her way, she meets some wolves. 2 of them die because of bears and hunters. The wolves save her many times. Julie knows wolves can talk so she can listen to the wolves when she calls.

Below is another example from Level 1, however, the subject has taken an aesthetic Stance 4. "I like how she had all the I like and I hate list. I like the description in it. I

Table 2

Mean Efferent/Aesthetic Responses for Males and Females by Book

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Book</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	
Females	3.69	3.44	3.96	3.7
Males	3.81	3.44	3.78	3.68

Note. Book A- Julie of The Wolves, Book 2- Addie Across the Prairie, Book C- Anastasia Krupnik

would definitely recommend it to someone else. It's one of the best books you've read." This subject focused on the plot structure to guide her answer.

Level 2- Indicates some interpretation of specific story events. Table 3 shows that the majority, 57.5% (73), of the responses made some interpretation of the story. At this level of response, subjects often made judgments about characters, inferences or explanations about a character's behavior. Subjects may disagree with a character's actions or try to explain why characters may have acted in certain ways. Responses also formed hypothesis about possible story events or behaviors. This can also include predicting how the story might be different or how the responder might change the story.

Several responses to Anastasia Krupnik indicated that there were several things subjects would change about the book. These ranged from the language and word choice in the story to Anastasia's actions and behaviors. For example, "It was okay, but I would use better language" or "I really like the story, but my only complaint is she kept saying well for Pete's sake".

Finally, a Level 2 response may express curiosity about story events or characters' behaviors. This will often come in the form of questioning or wanting to know more information than just what the text provides. For example, a response to Anastasia Krupnik:

I liked the book Anastasia Krupnik because it was the funniest book Mrs. Dixon has read to us. I think one eyed Riley was not a weird name for a mean name to me. I want to know what Washburn Cummings had on his T-shirt!

The next response from a Level 2 shows how the subject has interpreted why Addie from Addie Across the Prairie is her favorite character. It is based on the interpretation of Addie's actions.

My favorite parts of the book were when the Indians came and when there was the prairie fire. My favorite character was Addie. I liked her best because she deals with all the bad things that happen like the prairie fire and the Indians coming. The book was exciting and fun to listen to.

The following response indicates that one particular area of Julie of the Wolves is being written about. It is obvious how this subject has interpreted the story events. "I like the book Julie of the Wolves. It is a good book. The gross thing is when the wolves give the baby wolves regurgitated meat, but other than that it's a good book.

Level 3- Demonstrates understanding of specific story events through analogy to self or world. Table 3 shows that 14.2%, (18), of the responses came from Level 3. To reach

Table 3

Percentage of Responses at Each Personal Level of Understanding

<u>Level</u>	<u>Book</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	
1	28.6%	24.4%	13.6%	22%
2	52.4%	48.8%	70.5%	57.5%
3	16.7%	14.6%	11.4%	14.2%
4	2.4%	12.2%	4.5%	6.3%

Note. Book A- Julie of the Wolves, Book B- Addie Across the Prairie, Book c- Anastasia Krupnik

Level 3, subjects must go beyond the confines of the text to place themselves in the situation or events of the character. The subjects gained understanding through an efferent contemplation of literary elements or other analyses or as a result of an aesthetic focus of the story experience. Empathy for characters may also be displayed in responses.

The following subject is stating what she hypothesized it would be like to be Julie. Excerpts from the response state: "It would be really cold living in the tundra." "It would be weird being married when you're thirteen."

A Level 3 response also showed how the story could be applied to the subject's life, as well as to others who read the book. The following response to Anastasia Krupnik gives a vivid example of this type of response.

Anastasia Krupnik is a girl that is not like other people because she is a person who does a lot of things we wouldn't do like make up a name that makes no sense, but she did at the end, so she is okay. I think it is a book that should be read to all students in fourth grade because Anastasia learns from her mistakes like the hate list but in other words I like it.

Level 4- Reaches a generalized belief or understanding about life. As shown in table 3, only 6.3%, (8), of the total responses came from Level 4. This is the highest level of personal understanding and indicates generalizations about people and life. The personal meaning is more global and applicable to the world rather than being confined to specific events in the text.

The following response indicates how a Level 4 response can be applied to the world. This response also demonstrates many qualities found in a Level 3 response.

I liked George because he acts like me. We like to pick on our sisters. My favorite part was when the prairie fire comes. I didn't like the rest of it very well. I'm really glad I live in the 20th century!! I definitely couldn't live without electricity.

Several responses also indicated how the stories may have helped them learn about life a long time ago or how a story connected to other areas they have studied in school. "It helped me understand what it was like in those days, it also helped me write the journal we are suppose to do in Social." Another subject stated:, "I like Addie, it's just she seems a bit too girly for me. It ties in with our Social Studies, the history of Kansas. It's a good book, definitely a book for someone like me to read."

As shown in Table 4, mean responses for males and females were not found to be statistically significant. An analysis of variance was calculated to determine statistical significance, $F = .31$, $df = 1, 121$, $p > .05$. Males and females both used primarily a Level

2 for personal understanding. Mean responses for females was 2.08 (77 responses) and for males 2.00 (50 responses). The highest percentage mean score for females was , 2.20, on book 2 Addie Across the Prairie, and the highest mean responses for males, 2.06, was also on book 2. Lowest mean responses for females, 1.88, was on book 1, Julie of the Wolves , and lowest mean responses for males, 1.94, was book 3, Anastasia Krupnik.

In summary, data analysis revealed no statistical significance for either efferent/ aesthetic responses or personal levels of understanding. Statistically, males and females did not differ in giving efferent or aesthetic responses. Male mean score was 3.70, while female mean response was 3.68. Both genders have nearly reached a primarily aesthetic response (Stance 4).

In regards to personal levels of understanding, male and female mean responses were also not statistically significant. Female mean level of understanding was 2.08 and male mean level of personal understanding was 2.00. Both genders reached a level of understanding indicating some interpretation of specific story events (Level 2).

Table 4

Mean Responses for Males and Females at Each Level of Personal Understanding

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Book (1-3)</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	
Female	1.88	2.20	2.15	2.08
Male	2.00	2.06	1.94	2.00

Note. Book A- Julie of the Wolves, Book B- Addie Across the Prairie, Book C- Anastasia Krupnik

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study can be considered valid because of the high inter-rater reliability that was established between the researcher and an independent rater with expertise in the field of transactional theory. Inter-rater reliability was established at .88 on the efferent to aesthetic continuum and .85 on the personal levels of understanding continuum. This high correlation between raters indicates that research findings can be considered valid and reliable. It also helps give credibility to the findings and the following discussion.

Question 1 asked: Do efferent and aesthetic responses to literature with female main characters differ between males and females? The results of this study indicate that males and females do not respond differently to female main characters. Hutchins' (1989) and Gormley's (1992) findings that gender differences exist in response to literature were not confirmed. Instead, the present findings show that fourth grade males and females both respond close to a primarily aesthetic stance. The average stance reached by males was 3.68 and for females, the average stance reached was 3.70. Statistical analysis indicated that this was not a significant difference. At least at fourth grade, this research indicated that all students can efficiently use the two stances representative of the aesthetic mode of response. In fact, over 70% of the total responses were from a stance 4 or 5. On the continuum, these are indicative of the most aesthetic stances being assumed. Only 9.5% of the total responses used a stance 1 or 2 focus, while 21% of responses contained no predominate stance. This confirms the findings of Cox and Many (1992b), Hickman (1981), Lehman and Sharer (1993), Many (1992), Nissel (1987) and Tavenner (1993) who found that the aesthetic mode is the one preferred by students. The research findings could not support Galda (1990, 1992), Golden and Handloff (1993), and Many (1989a, 1991) who found that the efferent mode is the one preferred by students.

The findings attained by the researcher may have occurred for several reasons. These reasons may also account for some of the reasons why the findings supported or discounted earlier research. First, the findings indicate that all students were busy trying to relate and make connections to the stories. Males, as well as females, were trying to live through the experiences of the stories. Again, this research did indicate that all students were busy trying to obtain a stance of 4 instead of merely retelling the story,

which is indicative of stance 2.

A second reason no gender differences were found may help to shed positive light on male readers. Previous research (Bleakley et al., 1984; Johnson et al., 1984) found that females can and do relate to male characters. The findings from Chapter 4 show that males can also relate to female characters. It can, perhaps, be postulated that a wider variety of literature is being used in classrooms to expose all readers to all types of characters. This may be exactly what happened in these two classrooms. As the two classes progressed in grades from kindergarten through third grade, they may have been exposed to female characters in both traditional and non traditional roles. Therefore, male students were slowly given the chance to respond more aesthetically to female characters. This in turn, has changed the perceptions males have of the female characters.

The lack of gender differences may also be attributed to the literature used in this study. Perhaps, the literature selections were more indicative of evoking a higher level aesthetic response. Males and females may have equally evoked an aesthetic stance, had other selections been used, gender differences may have been found.

While statistical significance in gender differences was not found between efferent and aesthetic responses, a difference was found in the mean scores between males and females for each of the three selections. This was not a statistical significance, but shows which selection the genders responded highest. Overall, more aesthetic responses were given to Julie of the Wolves and Anastasia Krupnik. Males responded highest to Julie of the Wolves, with a mean score of 3.81. Females responded highest to Anastasia Krupnik, with a mean score of 3.96. Males and females both had the lowest mean response to Addie Across the Prairie, with a mean score of 3.44.

There could be several reasons for this occurrence. First, the themes of all three books were different. It could be that males identified more to the theme of survival in Julie of the Wolves. Females may have identified more to the theme of trying to carve out one's unique place in the family or world in Anastasia Krupnik. This would be reflective of research (Chiu, 1973; Fisher, 1988) which indicates children have a preference for the type of literature they like to read. The themes in these two novels would help to substantiate the idea that aesthetic bonds were formed with the type of literature each gender shows a preference towards. Perhaps, the reading preference of each gender extends into the preference for read alouds as well. This sentiment is echoed by Rosenblatt (1983, 1994). She believes that the theme used in literature will impact the type of transaction created with a text.

During informal discussions after the research study, students indicated that they preferred books based on the themes. Students also stated that they felt they could better relate to Anastasia and Julie because these were more recent characters, while Addie was a characters from the past (early 1900's). One student commented that she could relate to the theme in Anastasia Krupnik because she remembered when he brother was born and felt she could relate to Anastasia's feelings and thoughts. This was also noticed during observations of the students when each selection was being read. For example, males often said "cool" or "neat" while listening to the more gory aspects of Julie of the Wolves. Females often responded with comments such as "oh gross" or yuck."

Another factor that may have affected varied levels of responses may be the notion of prior knowledge. If responders have read Lois Lowry books, this may change the type of response given because they would be familiar with her style of writing . In addition, if the females in the study have read other Anastasia books, then this would skew the females towards more prior knowledge, thus creating more aesthetic bonds to the literature selection. Males may have had more prior knowledge about survival and some of the more "gory" aspects of Julie of the Wolves. This type of theme may not interest female readers. As each gender and person has varying prior knowledge, then this can affect the type of transaction that will occur with the text.

A final factor which may have influenced the level of responses given may be to order in which the books were read to each class. Classes were never read the same book at the same time. If students really enjoyed the first selection and not the second or third, then responses two and three would be lower. Higher expectation for the books two and three would have been established by book one. Conversely, if responders did not like book one, but did like books two and three, these responses would be higher. The order of the books may have relevance when discussing why the genders responded differently to the three selections. As much as counterbalancing was done to ensure that both classes were read the books at different times, perhaps the order in which the books were read did have some bearing on the final outcome.

While students did respond in a primarily aesthetic manner to all three books, one statistically significant difference was noted between books. Interestingly, results did indicate statistically significant differences in the aesthetic/ efferent responses given by males and females responders as a whole. This occurred on books two (Addie Across the Prairie) and book three (Anastasia Krupnik). Interactions between all other combinations of books did not reveal statistical significance. For book two, the mean response was 3.44

and for book three, the mean response was 3.89. This significance could be attributed to any of the before mentioned reasons such as theme, order of books read, and prior knowledge. However, this difference is most likely due to reader preference.

Through examining the mean responses to the books, it appears that Anastasia Krupnik was favored over Addie Across the Prairie. Having a preference for a particular book or style of book (in this study, the preference for Anastasia Krupnik) could lead to a more aesthetic transaction with the preferred book. Addie Across the Prairie was liked least by both genders. This indicates that this book had the lowest preference of the three selections and may have affected the mean scores. Additionally, Anastasia Krupnik had the highest mean score of all three selections, indicating its preference by the genders. These preferences by both genders may have led to higher aesthetic responses.

It is interesting to note that males related aesthetically to the selections, and particularly to Anastasia Krupnik. This is noteworthy due to the fact that research (Bleakley et al., 1988; Frasher and Frasher, 1979; Johnson et al., 1984; Lowther and Sullivan, 1993) indicates males tend to prefer books with male main characters. The males in this study broke the mold and responded just as aesthetically to Anastasia as did females. This may have also helped to account for some of the differences in scores between the two books.

When further examining the frequency of efferent or aesthetic responses an interesting finding arose during data analysis. This is the fact that class 1 was statistically higher in the level of aesthetic response than was class 0. Class 1's responses indicated a higher stance level at 3.85 than did class 0 at a 3.54 stance. The leading explanation for this difference may be the lack of control the researcher had over what occurred in the other classroom. The researcher had no way of knowing the amount of discussion or interaction between the teacher, students, and literature. The teacher for the other research class was briefly trained into the data collection procedures for this study and instructed not to give any kind of positive or negative feedback to the students during the study. Without the researcher actually reading the book to both classes, it can not safely be said the events that transpired and the conversations that were held during the reading of the three literature selections did not have an effect.

Research question 2 asked: Do personal levels of understanding of literature with female main characters differ between males and females? Results indicated that gender differences were not found in response to level of understanding. All fourth grade students were able to go beyond a level 1 response. Male mean response was 2.00 and female mean response was 2.08. With regards to the literature used, a range of 1.88 to 2.20 was

found by both genders and all three literature selections. Males had the highest level of understanding on Addie Across the Prairie, with a 2.06. Female mean responses were highest for this book as well at 2.20. This is extremely interesting due to the fact that Addie Across the Prairie had the least aesthetic responses in question one. Statistical analysis revealed that these difference in mean scores, 2.00 and 2.08 were not large enough to be significant. It was found that both genders were able to begin understanding the story in terms of the events of the story.

The researcher's findings do not substantiate Cox and Many's (1992b) and Many's (1989a, 1991) claim that students were not able to go beyond a level one response. These results indicated that the students were able go beyond the literal events in the story consistently and move towards a level 2 response which indicates responders have begun to interpret the meaning of selected story events.

The research findings may have been influenced by factors and important for male readers. First, the lack of significant gender differences in personal levels of understanding indicates that all students were busy trying to relate the story to their lives. Males, as well as females, were trying to find the personal relevance in the story. It appears that the responders were not as concerned with the role of the female character as they were with seeing how the story applied to them.

Second, this is also indicative of the fact that males are able to connect with male characters. It also indicates that males are able to begin to empathize and bond with female characters and situations. Perhaps, male responders were able to look past the gender of the character to fully understand the characters. By doing this, males, as well as females, will truly be able to relate the characters to themselves. Anderson and Many (1992) support this contention. They also found that students were busy trying to find the personal relevance of the story and did not spend time focusing on the traditional or non-traditional role of the characters. It appears that this also happened with this study. As more literature with positive female main characters is used, males may obtain even higher levels of understanding. Perhaps this also indicates that the usage of such literature is higher than previously thought.

While no significant gender differences were found, a statistically significant result did occur with regards to personal level of understanding and stance. This research found a .61 correlation between stance and level of understanding. The more aesthetic the response, the higher the level of personal understanding. When responders gave a stance 4 or 5 response, the personal level of understanding was also high at a level of 3 or 4. As

students were able to respond aesthetically, they were also able to apply the story to the world around them. This only makes sense because the more the child becomes engaged in the story, the more he or she is placing him or herself into the events and characters of the story. By creating aesthetic transactions with literature, students will in turn have a better understanding of the story.

This finding helped to confirm other researchers (Cox and Many, 1992b; Many, 1992) who reached the same conclusion. Cox and Many (1992b) found a .50 correlation for a stance 4 or 5 and a level of understanding at a 3 or 4. However, at .61, the researcher helped to substantiate even more strongly this correlation. The replication of Cox and Many's (1992b) and Many's (1992) research strengthens the connection between stance and personal level of understanding.

Though it was believed that gender differences would be found in examining the research questions, this is not disheartening news. It indicates that when looking at mean responses, males and females were able to respond between a primarily aesthetic and mostly aesthetic stance. When examining the actual percentages of responses, stance 4 and 5 prevailed as the favored response mode. Additionally, both genders reached almost a 2 or higher level of understanding. Perhaps, as males and females are exposed to a variety of characters, the gap between the genders will continue to lessen, as indicated by this research. It may be positive that gender differences were not found because this means education is helping to create equality in what males and female students learn, do, and the attitudes gained from the classroom.

Implications

When examining the research in this study, there are many implications that arise for the field of education. The research findings give great importance to using aesthetic responses in the classroom. This, in turn, leads to many implications for teachers and encourages teachers to change or modify their teaching practices and philosophies. In addition, this research touches on gender issues in education and supports the continued use of literature depicting positive and dominate female characters.

First, this research continues to support the use of aesthetic responses in classrooms. By supporting the use of aesthetic responses, students are helped in obtaining some control for their learning. The philosophies of empowerment and individualization are strong educational ideologies raised by this study. By allowing students to tie their lives to the literature used in the classroom, students are being encouraged to see multiple views and thoughts about literature. Students can then share these personal connection with a small

group or class. This would allow students to understand the literature through others interpretations. Students are allowed to personalize literature and this allows them to feel control over their learning. When allowing students to experience literature for themselves, they become empowered to think and make their own personal connections.

Additionally, with the use of aesthetic responses in classrooms, the one right answer dilemma is avoided. As Rosenblatt (1983, 1994) believes, literature should be open to multiple interpretations. She also believes that the reading of any literature should involve more than reading to find answer to questions. By encouraging students to find the answers to a set of questions over a literature selection defeats the purpose of using aesthetic based teaching. The focus of the reading event becomes very different when encouraging aesthetic reading. Students are not busy searching for answers to teacher made questions, but they are searching for the personal relevance of the story.

Finally, by supporting the use of aesthetic responses, students will ultimately have a better understanding of the story. As this research and the research of Cox and Many (1992b) and Many (1992) found, high aesthetic responses lead to higher levels of personal understanding. By encouraging aesthetic responses, students are also achieving a better understanding of the story. Students will be responding aesthetically, while also attaining the goal of improved comprehension. By promoting aesthetic responses, educators will also be fostering better understanding of the literature students are reading.

As education supports the use of aesthetic teaching methods and responses, it will also result in teaching changes by teachers. Zarillo and Cox (1992) support the use of using aesthetic teaching methods. Their research found that using aesthetic teaching practices benefits classrooms in many ways such as open communication and discussion among the class. To accomplish this, teachers will need to change the questioning techniques used in the classroom. Literal level comprehension, "grill and drill", questions will not dominate classroom discussions. Instead, teachers will focus discussions around higher level questions. Also, open ended questions will guide discussions and assignments. This may be intimidating for teachers and requires them to allow for student empowerment and individual thoughts and reactions to stories. The benefits, however, are worth it.

Not only will employing the transactional theory of reading, and specifically aesthetic reading, require teachers to change their questioning techniques, but it will also encourage teachers to listen and value individual interpretations. Aesthetic teaching practices take the focus off concentrating on the information learned from a literature selection. Instead, it helps teachers to see and hear each student individually. The individual students and their

personal reactions and thoughts about the literature become central to the classroom. This encourages teachers to look past students obtaining the "right answer" to see their students uniqueness and individuality through the interpretation of the story.

The last teacher change that will be instituted by teachers who choose to use Rosenblatt's theory of teaching reading will be in the ways teachers instruct students to think. As Many (1992) believes, teachers should teach students the methods needed to think aesthetically. Just as students are formally taught how to read expository texts, they will be taught how to read a story aesthetically. This will require teachers to adapt or adopt some new teaching methods and practices in their classrooms. Teachers will need to build a repertoire of teaching strategies that encourage aesthetic teaching. It must be said that students may not learn to think aesthetically over night or even in a week. It is a process that will take time. As this way of thinking will be new for teachers, it most likely will be new for students. It is by helping children think aesthetically throughout their schooling, that the goal of aesthetic reading will eventually be met. Teachers must also work together and learn from each other about how to best employ Rosenblatt's transactional theory and aesthetic reading. It will be then that the implication of this research for teaching will be carried out.

This research also has implications with regards to gender issues in education. This research supports the continued use of aesthetic teaching for males and females. Perhaps, this research indicates that males and females are both being taught to think aesthetically. The gender biases for males and females may be dissipating. Males may realize that expressing personal feelings and thoughts is to be admired. By encouraging both genders to think and react aesthetically, only helps all students.

This research helps to imply that equality in educating all students is being carried out. Males may finally be being encouraged to focus on feelings, while females are being taught to also be efferent readers. As Sadker and Sadker (1994) state, males and females must be allowed to expand themselves past what is considered gender appropriate thoughts, attitudes, and learning. By finding no significant gender differences in responses, this may be indicative of the fact that males and females are both being taught to be aesthetic thinkers, thus creating equality in the learning experiences achieved by the genders.

The final implication of this research lies in the continued use of literature with female characters depicted in positive, dominate roles. Anderson and Many (1992) found that all students were so busy making aesthetic connections to literature, that the role of the

character became secondary. Almost the same results were found by the researcher. It was found that both genders were busy trying to relate to the stories and characters. By using literature with positive female characters, both genders will be encouraged to relate to them. Males, as well as females, will be given the chance to create aesthetic bonds to female characters. Gender fair materials help to create equality in classrooms (Scott, 1986). Classrooms where literature with female main characters is used gives all students the opportunity to relate to and bond with these characters.

Future Research

The basic findings in this research study help lay a foundation for other research possibilities. For example, a longer study could be conducted to determine the differences in efferent and aesthetic responses given to literature with female main characters, male main characters, and both a female and male main character. This would help to determine if male and female responders respond differently to male and female characters. It could then be confirmed through this further research if males and females would respond the same to female characters. By examining more than one character type, it could be determined more specifically, if students always respond aesthetically or if the type of character, either male or female, does indeed affect the nature of the transaction created with the text. A clearer picture could also be formed to see how males and females respond to more than one type of character. For example, do female responders respond more efferently or aesthetically to male or female main characters in literature. Looking at three types of characters in literature would give a well rounded picture of how all students respond to characters.

Another avenue for research would be to examine ethnicity and gender. How do male and female responders of varying ethnicities respond to female main characters? The present research pool was made of primarily Caucasian students. It would be noteworthy to determine if the ethnicity of the responder made a difference in the type of transaction created with the text. For example, do Caucasian females respond more efferently or aesthetically to female main characters than do African American or Hispanic females? By examining ethnicity, a more specific picture of male and female readers could be formed. Instead of generalizing about just gender, results could be broken down by ethnicity and gender, giving researchers an even more thorough understanding into how efferent and aesthetic responses are formed by all readers.

This study could also be expanded to determine how students at more than one grade level respond to dominate female characters in literature. This would help to ascertain if

students changed in the type of responses made at different grade levels. It may also give valuable insight into how females and males change over time when responding to literature.

A final way to expand this research study, is by asking the question, Do more aesthetic response also correlate to higher levels of personal understanding? This was only touched on briefly during this study. By formally examining this question, it can be shown that responding aesthetically to literature is vital because students will better understand the stories they have read. This connection between efferent/aesthetic reading and levels of personal understanding could help to strengthen the use of aesthetic reading.

Limitations

The discussion on ways this research could be expanded bring to light some limitations that were present in this research study. First, the total population used for the study was fairly small, 44 students. This limits the generalizability to fourth grade students. It would be difficult to generalize the findings to the broader population of students.

Next, this research is limited by the fact that the study was conducted in only one school. This also helps to limit the generalizability in that results can only be applied to the subjects within the research school. It can not be safely said that the same statistical findings would occur with other school classrooms. To create more generalizability, several fourth grade classrooms within the district would need to be utilized.

Another limitation recognized in this study lies in the research procedures. By using another classroom and teacher to help conduct the study, it can not positively be stated exactly what events transpired in the second classroom at the time of the study. To avoid this problem, future research may have the researcher reading the book to both classes to avoid this problem. It would also help to limit external and internal factors that could have affected the responses students wrote.

A final limitation of this study is that the study only examined responses at one grade level. This can also affect the generalizations to a population beyond fourth grade students. It can also not account for changes that may occur in different grade levels. Perhaps gender differences would be found when comparing fourth, sixth, and eighth grade.

Postscript

While it was postulated that gender differences in stance and personal levels of understanding may be found, the lack of statistically significant results from this study can be seen in a positive light. First, it indicates that all students were able to respond at nearly

a level 4, which is indicative of a primarily aesthetic stance. This suggests that perhaps a variety of influences inside and outside of school, are creating more gender fair experiences for male and female students. It appears that male and female students are both responding positively to female main characters in more dominate and non traditional roles.

The findings of this research provide implications for the field of education. The findings support the use of allowing students to respond aesthetically to literature. This helps to empower students, and will ultimately lead to higher levels of understanding. This research also has implications for teachers. It suggests that perhaps teachers need to reevaluate what occurs in their classrooms. It also encourages teachers to teach students to be aesthetic thinkers. The research also supports the continued use of literature with positive, dominate female characters. It also suggests that education may be doing a more thorough job of creating equality in educating male and female students.

This research helps to lay a strong foundations for other avenues of research. In this present study, it was the desire of the researcher to examine gender differences of students at only one grade to female main characters. It will be future researchers, who will build upon the findings of this research. While research findings were not always as expected, they help to add to the body of research exploring efferent and aesthetic reading. It will be by embracing Rosenblatt's notion of reader stance that students will be taught to evaluate and appreciate literature. Students will also be taught to value their own responses and the responses of others as they read together aesthetically.

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APPENDIX A

Letter Given to Experts in the Field of Children's Literature

Appendix A
Letter Given to Experts in the Field of Children's Literature

Please read through the attached list of books. In my study, I am using three books that have strong, dominate female characters. I am looking for a unifying theme among the three choices I am using. Please mark your top three choices below and state why you feel these three selections should be used. Also, please feel free to add a selection that is not on the list. The study will involve fourth grade students, and therefore, needs to be a book which would be appropriate with this age group. Your help is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robin Dixon

TOP THREE CHOICES

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

These three selections were chosen because _____

Name _____

Your name will not be associated with the research study.

Book Selections for Read Alouds in Research Study

1. TITLE: Addie Across the Prairie

AUTHOR: Laurie Lawlor

PUBLISHED: Niles, Illinois: A. Whitman 1986.

NOTES: Unhappy to leave her home and friends, Addie reluctantly accompanies her family to the Dakota Territory and slowly begins to adjust to life on the prairie.

2. TITLE: Anastasia Krupnik

AUTHOR: Lois Lowry

PUBLISHED: Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1979

NOTES: Anastasia's 10th year has some good things like falling in love and really getting to know her grandmother and some bad things like finding out about an impending baby brother.

3. TITLE: The Great Gilly Hopkins

AUTHOR: Katherine Paterson

PUBLISHED: New York: Crowell 1978

NOTES: An eleven year-old foster child tries to cope with her longings and fears as she schemes against everyone who tries to be friendly.

4. TITLE: The Hundred Dresses

AUTHOR: Eleanor Estes

PUBLISHED: New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich 1944

NOTES: In winning a medal she is no longer there to receive, a tight-lipped little Polish girl teaches her classmates a lesson.

5. TITLE: Ida Early Comes Over the Mountain

AUTHOR: Robert Burch

PUBLISHED: New York: Viking Press 1980

NOTES: Tough times in rural Georgia during the Depression takes a lively turn when spirited Ida Early arrives to keep house for the Sutton's.

6. TITLE: Julie of the Wolves

AUTHOR: Jean Craighead George

PUBLISHED: New York: Harper and Row 1972

NOTES: While running away from home and an unwanted marriage, a thirteen year old Eskimo girl becomes lost on the North Slope of Alaska and is befriended by a pack of wolves.

7. TITLE: Muggie Maggie

AUTHOR: Beverly Cleary

PUBLISHED: New York: Morrow Junior Books

NOTES: Maggie resists learning cursive writing in the third grade, until she discovers that knowing how to read and write opens up an entirely new world of knowledge for her.

8. TITLE: Pippi Longstocking

AUTHOR: Astrid Lingrid

PUBLISHED: New York: Viking Press 1950.

NOTES: Escapades of a lucky girl who lives with a horse and a monkey- but without any parents- at the edge of a Swedish village.

9. TITLE: Sarah, Plain and Tall

AUTHOR: Patricia MacLachlan

PUBLISHED: New York: Harper Trophy 1985

NOTES: When their father invites a mail-order bride to come live with them in their prairie home, Caleb and Anna are captivated by their new mother and hope that she will stay.

APPENDIX B
Parental Permission Letter

Appendix B
Parental Permission Letter

November 1995

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Kansas supports the practice of informed consent for subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you will allow your child to participate in the present study.

During teacher read aloud time in the classroom, your child will listen to three stories. Each story will take approximately three weeks to finish. Your child's classroom teacher will read for approximately 15 to 20 minutes per day. This is a normal part of your child's day and does not interfere with other classroom activities. Each of the three stories contains a dominate female main character in the story. After the entire selection has been read, students will be asked to write a response to the question, "Write anything you want about the book I just finished." The literature has been selected from the Lawrence School District Literature lists. The regular curriculum or your child's learning will not be hampered. The study will take nine weeks to complete, and will begin the first week in January.

I want to look at the different types of responses students give to literature. I am also interested to discover if the types of responses given by males and females differ. For example, do girls relate more to the female character in the story? Or do boys distance themselves from the female main character? This research is important because it will help to see if gender differences need to be considered when choosing literature to read to children. It will also help discover what type of responses students are giving to literature. In addition, this research will help to discover if males and females are relating their lives and experiences in the classroom.

Your child's participation is solicited but strictly voluntary. I assure that your child's name will not in any way be associated with the research findings. The information will be identified only through a colored code by gender.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please contact me by phone at 842-8864. Thank you very much for your time and I appreciate your interest and cooperation. Please return this letter of consent as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Robin Dixon
Graduate Student
(913)842-8864

Dr. Steven White
Professor
(913) 864- 9662

Signature of parent or legal guardian

With my signature I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.